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THE BIBLE
ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH

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By

COSTEN J. HARRELL

C. A. BOWEN, D.D., *General Editor*

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PREFACE

In this little volume the author has undertaken what appears to him to be an almost impossible task—to trace in a satisfactory manner within the space of twelve short chapters the history of the growth of the Bible to its final recognition as the inspired Word of God. No reader will be more deeply conscious of the imperfections of this volume than is the author himself. He has not been unmindful of the fact he is dealing with a body of sacred literature, and has endeavored throughout to handle it with becoming reverence. All readers may not agree with the conclusions reached here, and the author lays no claim to infallibility. He has written out of an honest heart, endeavoring at all times reverently and candidly

> To tell the thing as he sees it
> For the God of things as they are.

In order to keep within the limits assigned it has been necessary to omit much material which the author had hoped to include. Readers who desire to go further into the subjects treated here are referred in particular to *The Canon of the Old Testament,* Ryle; *Introduction to the New Testament,* Salmon; and *Inspiration,* Sanday. Three purposes have guided the writer in the arrangement of the footnotes: (1) To refer the reader to the passages of Scripture that throw light on the subject in hand; (2) To call attention to matters that do not properly belong in the body of the text and yet would tend to stimulate

interest in the subject; (3) To direct the reader who may be so disposed to further investigation. It is highly important that this little volume be read with a Bible at hand, and that all Scripture references be faithfully looked up. The Bible is its own best interpreter. Most of the Biblical quotations are from the American Revised Version.

The author is deeply indebted to Dr. Franklin N. Parker, of Emory University, who went over all the manuscript save the last chapter and made many valuable suggestions.

It has been said that one never truly understands anything until he knows something about its origin. What employment could be more profitable than a study of the growth of the Bible? We are inclined to accept it as a matter of course, but its value will be greatly enhanced for one if he will take the pains to study the process by which it was made.

The chapters in substantially their present form were delivered originally in a series of prayer meeting addresses at the First Methodist Church, Atlanta, in the summer and fall of 1925.

If in the larger sphere into which they are now sent they shall serve to awaken interest and deepen faith in the Bible as the Word of God the author will be abundantly repaid for all the labor they have cost him.

COSTEN J. HARRELL.

Epworth Methodist Church,
Norfolk, Virginia.

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DEDICATION

TO

AMY WALDEN HARRELL

MY COMPANION OF THE WAY
AND TRUE HELPMEET IN THE MINISTRY
THIS VOLUME IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
EPHESIANS 6: 17.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good works." 2 TIMOTHY 3: 16, 17.

"We search the world for Truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
And weary seekers of the best;
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the ages said
Is in the book our mothers read."
AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

"All that I have taught of art, everything I have written, whatever greatness there has been in any thought of mine, whatever I have done in my life, has simply been due to the fact that, when I was a child, my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible, and daily made me learn my part of it by heart."
JOHN RUSKIN.

"In all ages great men have gone to the Bible as to the very springs of thought and inspiration. This Book lent Milton his Paradise Lost; lent Handel his Messiah; lent Titian his Transfiguration; lent Christopher Wren the plan of his Cathedral; lent liberty to Cromwell; lent Lincoln a rule, 'golden' for white and black alike."
NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS.

CHAPTER I

THE DIVINE LIBRARY—A GENERAL VIEW

The Bible a Unique Book

One morning a few days before his death, Sir Walter Scott asked to be rolled in his invalid chair into his library and placed by the great central window where he might look down upon the river Tweed a few furlongs away. As there he sat, weakened by disease, resting his eyes upon the peaceful scenes of Abbotsford and the Tweed, whose murmuring song had often enchanted his heart, he asked his son-in-law, John Lockhart, to read to him. "What book?" asked Lockhart. "Need you ask?" he replied. "There is but one." Lockhart opened the Bible at the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to John and read. Sir Walter listened with "mild devotion," and when the chapter was ended said, "Well, this is a great comfort." Then, comforted by assurances found nowhere else in the literature of the world, he fell into a restful sleep.[1] This tribute to the Bible from the lips of Scotland's greatest novelist, on the eve of his departure, fittingly introduces us to the Book which is the subject of these studies.

The Bible is a unique book. There is none other like it. There is none other comparable to it. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that in it we find a satisfying revelation of

[1] Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott,* abbreviated edition, p. 773.

the mind of the Eternal God. It is an inspired book. It is, in an especial sense, God's Word to us. The devout man discovers in its message the Voice of God speaking to the soul. In the Person of Jesus Christ, whose story is told on the pages of the great Book, God has opened the door of salvation to mankind.

A knowledge of how the Bible came to be should not lessen our reverence for it any more than studying botany should destroy one's love for flowers. These studies will fall short of the aim of the author if they do not deepen our appreciation of the incomparable merit of the great Book.

The uniqueness of the Bible message has won for it a distinct place in the literature of the world. Written in Hebrew and Greek, it has been translated into seven hundred and seventy languages and dialects. Originating among the Hebrew people, whose home was an Eastern land no larger than a half dozen American counties, its voice is heard to the ends of the earth. Portions of it written by men unlearned in the schools, it has become the model of the world's noblest literature and the inspiration of its greatest art.[2] Written in the long ago, it is to-day the most popular of all books. In 1924 the printing presses of the world turned out approximately 30,000,000 copies of the Bible or portions of it, and the number is increasing annually. None other than a book with a message out of

[2] Charles Dickens was a master of pathos. Being asked on one occasion what was the most touching story in literature, he replied, "The story of the Prodigal Son."

Coleridge, whose "conversation sparkled with jewels of thought," when asked to name the richest passage in literature, answered, "The Beatitudes."

he eternities could win for itself so large a place in the eart of mankind.

The influence of the Bible on the civilizations of the vorld should convince the most skeptical of its unique- ess. Our laws of justice are founded on its teachings. ands in which the Bible has been an unknown or closed ook have been cursed by ignorance and superstition and piritual lethargy. Wherever the message of the Bible as gotten into the hearts of men light and liberty have uickly followed. Luther gives Europe an open Bible nd Protestantism is born. Under the influence of its eaching in China, an order of society dating farther back nan the age of Moses gives way to a new republic. Hux- ey, though himself an agnostic, bears this testimony to the nfluence of the Bible: "Throughout the history of the Western World the Scriptures, Jewish and Christian, have een the greatest instigators of revolt against the worst orms of political and clerical despotism. The Bible has een the Magna Charta of the poor and of the oppressed; own to modern times no State has had a constitution in vhich the interests of the people are so largely taken into ccount, in which the duties, so much more than the privi- eges, of rulers are insisted upon, as that drawn up for srael in Deuteronomy and Leviticus; nowhere is the undamental truth that the welfare of the State, in the ong run, depends upon the uprightness of the citizen so trongly laid down. Assuredly the Bible talks no trash bout the rights of man; but it insists upon the equality of uties, on the liberty to bring about that righteousness vhich is somewhat different from struggling for 'rights'; n the fraternity of taking thought for one's neighbor as

for one's self."[3] Assuredly the Bible has been "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path."

The Bible a Library

We have spoken of the Bible as a Book, and in a very real sense it is. It is a collection of writings on one great theme, God and man's relation to him. This theme running through the whole unites the parts into a single book. One may study it with no thought of how and when its parts originated and how and when they were brought together. Innumerable thousands have so studied it, and found in it the way of life.

Essentially, however, the Bible is a library, and its message is the better understood and more easily applied when this first fact is recognized by its readers. Between its covers there are sixty-six books, each one having its own title and its own distinct message. These books were in the making through a period of more than 2,000 years. No one knows how many authors had a share in producing them. Each writer, led by the Spirit, wrote down in his own way the things that had been revealed to him concerning God. In this collection of sacred writings there are poems, biographies, sermons, letters, hymns, books of law and history and treatises in philosophy.

The title which the Church Fathers gave the Bible in the early centuries of the Christian era clearly indicates that it was originally thought of as a library of many books. They called it "Biblia," *books,* the form being the plural

[3] Quoted from Prof. James Orr in *The Bible in the World Today,* p. 80.

of the Greek neuter noun, Biblion. The title was brought over from the Greek into the Latin tongue. The form "Biblia," in Latin, may be a neuter plural or a feminine singular, as all who have labored over the declension of Latin nouns will remember. As men were impressed with the unity of the sacred writings, they thought of them more and more as a single book. So, in part through a grammatical error, the neuter plural was treated as a feminine singular, and "Biblia," *books,* became "Biblia," *book,* from which is derived our English word *Bible.*

In the chapters which lie before us, we shall be thinking of it primarily as a library.

The Bible a Progressive Revelation

When one approaches the Bible as a library of many books, he is introduced to a second fact, closely related to the first, and equally important to a right understanding of the Scriptures. The Bible is a *progressive* revelation of God. Its teachings begin with elemental truths concerning God and the soul. Step by step for twenty centuries lawgivers and psalmists and prophets were attaining more elevated thoughts concerning God and his mercy. After the long preparation of the Old Testament, and when the fullness of time had come, God revealed himself fully in the Person of his Son. Through the whole "one increasing purpose runs."

The progress of God's revelation is most evident even to the casual reader of the Scriptures. The books that make up the whole do not move on the same spiritual plane. No one feels that the author of Judges has as

exalted a conception of God as Paul, or that Leviticus is equal to Hebrews, or that the book of Nahum satisfies the heart like the Gospel of John. It was necessary that at the first God should reveal the simplest things concerning himself, because men were ready to receive no more. Moses, under the leadership of God's Spirit, was able to apprehend the elemental laws of righteousness, but neither he nor his time was ready to receive the gospel of universal redemption which was delivered to Paul. Centuries of slow development in spiritual things made possible God's larger revelation. It was with the Scriptures as with the kingdom of God, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." (Mark 4:28.)

When one recognizes the Bible as a progressive revelation of God, it is at once vitalized for him and its spiritual value greatly enhanced. This book was not delivered to the world ready-made, but is the long story of man's experience with God. The Spirit wrought it out of the joys and sorrows, the visions and aspirations and sinning and penitence and heroic surrender of human souls, like

> ". . . iron dug from central gloom,
> And heated hot with burning fears,
> And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
> And battered with the shocks of doom
> To shape and use."

The fascinating story of God's revelation is like climbing a mountain, each step toward the summit bringing one into clearer air, and revealing to him a more beautiful and extensive landscape.

The fact that the Bible is a progressive revelation

solves the many moral difficulties that one meets in the Old Testament. The personal life of Abraham, the greatest of the patriarchs and the father of the faithful, violates the New Testament standard of chastity. The institution of slavery, recognized and practiced in the Old Testament, cannot be justified in the light of the New Testament doctrine of brotherhood. We must remember that the Old Testament is not God's *completed* Word. Jesus, answering an inquiry of the Pharisees on this point, said that the law of Moses permitted certain things because of the hardness of their hearts, and continued with the authoritative words, "But I say unto you." (Matt. 19:8, 9.) We can excuse an act in a child that cannot be condoned in an adult. One must therefore seize on the moral and spiritual teachings of the Old Testament and be patient with their incompleteness. They are *fundamental,* but they are not *final.* Jesus came to fulfill (literally the Greek word means to fill to the full) the law and the prophets. The New Testament fills to the full and completes God's progressive revelation.

The Completed Bible Called the Canon

Words, like people, have family trees. We can never fully understand the force of their meanings until we know something of their antecedents. The word "canon," which will appear frequently in the course of our studies, has a very interesting family history.

When the sixty-six books of the Bible had been brought together and approved by the Church as the authoritative guide for the Christian in matters of faith and conduct,

the whole was called the Canon. The word in the Greek tongue, in which the New Testament was originally written, is "kanon," and literally means a *reed.* In ancient times reeds were widely used for measuring, and so the word "kanon" came to mean in the common speech of the day "a tool of the carpenter or builder, used for determining the right direction of a piece of wood or stone to be used in building." This tool was also usually provided with a scale for measuring.[4] It was a *level* and measuring rule in one.

The meaning of the word when applied to the Scriptures is obvious. This collection of sacred literature was called the Canon, because it was judged to be the rule and standard of the Christian faith. By it all questions of doctrine and conduct must be tested. The word "Canon" stamps the Scriptures as our guide, our measuring rod, our sure standard by which error can be separated from truth in all questions of religion. The Canon of Scripture is, as Bishop Westcott happily puts it, "a written Rule of Christian faith and life."

Our Plan and Purpose

There are two methods of Bible study—the devotional and the historical. In one's devotional study he is not concerned about when and why and by whom the passage he is reading was written. He is looking for help for his heart's immediate need. This method of study is productive of inestimable spiritual results. The historical method seeks to understand the setting of a passage—

[4] *The Text and Canon of the New Testament,* Souter, pp. 154 ff.

from whence and how it came—to the end that one may better apprehend its meaning and application. These methods of Bible study are not conflicting, but supplementary. One may drink a cup of water with no thought of whence or how it came to him. It will quench his thirst. But would it not add greatly to his enjoyment of it and stir deeply his heart's gratitude to know how God had brought it in the clouds and filtered it in the rocks to make it a pure and refreshing draft? Likewise does not a historical study of the Bible deepen and sweeten our devotional study?

These chapters are primarily a historical study of the Bible. The inquiry before us is how the Bible came to be. This inquiry involves three distinct questions: First, How did the parts of this divine library originate? Second, How were they separated from the other religious literature produced at the same time and by the same people? Third, How and when were these parts brought together in one Book, the Bible, and recognized by the Church as the Canon of the Holy Scriptures?

To all of these questions one may reply that the Bible is from God and judge that to be answer sufficient. It is indeed from God. A book so unique, so mighty in righteousness, so satisfying to the heart, so able to lead one into communion with the Father—such a book could come from no source but God. But our question is, What method was used by God in giving us our Bible? No one claims that it was dropped out of heaven by a golden string. The Bible is God speaking *to* man *through* man. Then how?

If in the course of our studies we find that God did

not give us our Bible in precisely the way we had thought, we need not be disturbed. God is greater than the Bible. The method by which he made himself known cannot invalidate him or his message.

"Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own."

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. What is meant by the statement that the Bible is a unique book? What makes it unique? How has its uniqueness been recognized by the world?

2. Do you think that a study of how the Bible came to be should in any way destroy its spiritual value? Do you think that such a study should help us to understand its message? How?

3. In what sense is the Bible a book?

4. Why do we call the Bible a library?

5. From what Greek word is "Bible" derived? What did it originally mean? How did the change in meaning come about?

6. What is meant by the statement that the Bible is a progressive revelation of God? Illustrate in your own way how the teachings of the Bible progress. How does this fact solve many moral difficulties one meets in the Old Testament?

7. Look up the word "Canon" in your dictionary and write the definition on the margin of this page. What did the word originally mean in the Greek tongue? What does the word mean when applied to the Bible?

8. Name and clearly distinguish the two methods of Bible study. Do these conflict? Explain your answer.

9. State clearly the three questions before us in our studies in the history of the Canon.

10. Should the discovery of the fact that God did not give us the Bible in precisely the way we had thought in any sense disturb our faith in the Bible as the word of God? Why?

THE OLD TESTAMENT

"Our times are in his hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid.'"

ROBERT BROWNING.

"Just as one particular branch of one particular stock was chosen to be in a general sense the recipient of a clearer revelation than was vouchsafed to others, so within that branch certain individuals were chosen to have their hearts and minds moved in a manner more penetrating and more effective than their fellows, with the result that their written words convey to us truths about the nature of God and his dealings with man which other writings do not convey with equal fullness, power, and purity. We say that this special moving is due to the action upon those hearts and minds of the Holy Spirit. And we call this action inspiration."

WILLIAM SANDAY.

"Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows."

ROBERT BROWNING.

"Believe and trust; through stars and suns,
Through life and death, through soul and sense,
His wise paternal purpose runs;
The darkness of his providence
Is star-lit with divine intents."

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE WORD

A Chosen People

"What is the best argument for the truth of the Christian religion?" Frederick the Great is reputed to have asked his chaplain. "The Jews, your Majesty," was the reply. In the last chapter we spoke of the Bible as a unique Book. A further fact must now be noted: this unique Book was written in its entirety, so far as we are able to judge, by the Hebrews, with the exception of the third Gospel and the Book of Acts, which were written by Luke, a Gentile. The lone Gentile whose writings are included in the Canon owes his place there to the influence of the Christian Jews of the First Century, and to the Apostle Paul in particular. In the preceding chapter the statement was also made that the Bible is a progressive revelation of God. To this statement we may now add another: God's progressive revelation was unfolded through the history of the Hebrew people, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ, who was himself a son of Abraham, after the flesh, and of the tribe of Judah.

As soon as we begin to inquire into the origin and growth of the Bible, we are brought face to face with "a peculiar people, a royal priesthood," with whom it is inseparably connected. It was written by their hands,

in their languages, clothed in their habits of thought and manner of life. The truth concerning God and the soul which this great race has bequeathed to mankind is our richest spiritual heritage, and there is force in the statement that the Jew, with his expanding experience of God through the centuries when the Bible was in the making, is the best argument for the truth of the Christian religion.

In this universe, back of which is the intelligent mind of God, ever planning, ever working, things do not happen by chance. We must therefore seek for a reasonable explanation of the remarkable fact that the Hebrews should have gained a knowledge of God far in advance of other nations. Their spiritual discernment could not have grown naturally out of their environment, for other peoples who lived in the same part of the world and whose lives were touched by the same external influences were hopelessly lost in idolatry and went from bad to worse. We have only to recall the Moabites, the Edomites, the Canaanites, and other tribes against whose false deities Israel was ever contending. Furthermore, nothing can be evolved that is not first involved. The Hebrews' superior knowledge of God could not have been obtained from other peoples, for none other had it. It cannot be attributed to their superior intellect, because in pure intellectual pursuits they were excelled by other people of antiquity, notably the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, and yet these people, with all their intellectual equipment and searching after the truth, were unable to attain a satisfying knowledge of God.

There is but one reasonable explanation of the conspicuous place occupied by the Hebrew race in God's

revelation of himself. They were his chosen people, through whom he in an especial way made himself known to the world. Why God selected the Hebrews rather than any other people, it does not lie within the province of this volume to say. That he did disclose himself to them as to no other people is a patent fact to every one who will read the Bible.[1] One of the cardinal teachings of Christianity is that God is a person. Being a person who knows and loves and acts, and no mere blind force, he did not leave man to discover him as best he could. We know that self-expression is an essential element in personality, therefore God the Person has of his own volition made known to man the secrets of his heart. He chose as his medium of revelation the Hebrew people, and through their long history, through the prophets and psalmists and apostles of this great race, through the Messiah who according to the flesh sprang from Hebrew loins, he has spoken to the world concerning himself. "It is what St. Paul calls 'a purpose or design according to election (or selection).' . . . For the Hebrews it was reserved beyond all other peoples to teach the world what it has known of religion."

[1] Scholars who have examined the Old Testament from a critical point of view have been most pronounced in attributing to it a divine origin. An eminent German scholar and critic declares that his belief in a "genuine revelation of God in the Old Testament remains rockfast." "The late Professor Robertson Smith affirmed again and again his belief in the divine origin of the Old Testament." Professor George Adam Smith, whose writings have made the Old Testament live again, says: "It is my firm belief that . . . in the Old Testament there is an authentic revelation of the one true God."

The Chosen People and the Written Word

The unique Book points backward to a unique people. This fact should make clear to us the next step in our studies, that the written Word grew out of the faith and the elevated spiritual discernment of a chosen race. Not first the Bible and then faith, but first faith and then the Bible. God did not first write the Bible and afterward create man to obey it. "Our Lord did not give us the Gospels and the Epistles and then appoint apostles and disciples to lecture about them." God produced a community of believers, called the Church, and the Bible came out of the Church. The Old Testament grew out of the Jewish Church; the New Testament grew out of the Christian Church of the First Century. Out of the experience of the Hebrew people with God, out of their increasing understanding of the beauty and holiness of the Lord, running through some twenty centuries, the Bible came.[2]

The beginning of the Word was, therefore, in the far dim past when God began to illumine the souls of select men out of the chosen race so that they perceived the first principles of the Divine Nature. The next stage in the making of the Bible came when the truth which they had been thus led to see began to assume definite literary form, either oral or written. This order in God's revelation must be kept clearly before us. We are now prepared

[2] *Inspiration,* by Sanday, p. 126. Those desiring to look further into the question of God's choice of a particular people are referred especially to *Inspiration,* Sanday, pp. 124-165; *Belief in God,* Gore, pp. 74-109; *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament,* Smith, pp. 110-144.

to address ourselves to the main thesis of this book, which is the process by which the Word grew from these beginnings to the Bible that is our priceless inheritance.

The Simplest Explanation May Not be the True One

It is no easy matter to trace the beginnings and development of a literature so long in the making. To this task devout scholars, who have not doubted the divine origin of the Old Testament, have long addressed themselves. The simplest answer that can be given to this inquiry is that each book of the Canon was written in its present form, beginning with Moses and ending with Malachi, and added to the collection layer upon layer as one period of Israel's history followed another, until the whole was completed. The Jewish Talmud, completed in the early Christian centuries, gives such an account of the growth of the Scriptures: "And who wrote them? Moses wrote his own book (Genesis to Deuteronomy) and the section concerning Balaam and Job. Joshua wrote his own book and eight verses of the law. Samuel wrote his own book and Judges and Ruth. David wrote the Book of Psalms at the direction of ten elders—viz., Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Jeduthan, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. Jeremiah wrote his own book and the Book of Kings and Lamentations. Hezekiah and his college wrote Isaiah, Proverbs and the Song of Songs, and Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes). The men of the great synagogue wrote Ezekiel, the XII (Minor Prophets), Daniel and

Esther. Ezra wrote his own book and the genealogies of the Book of Chronicles as far as himself." [3]

It may be that many of our ideas concerning the formation of the Old Testament are derived from the Talmud. When the Christian Church took over the Scriptures of the Jews it took over also many of the "traditions of the elders," which Jesus had so vehemently condemned. This explanation of the beginning and development of the Old Testament has one thing to commend it. It is simple, but the simplest explanation may not be the true one. The idea of other generations that the earth is the center of the universe, and that the sun and the moon and the stars revolve around it, is simple. It is much easier to understand than the things the astronomers tell us to-day, but we have discarded it because we have learned that it is not true. We must not cling to a thing because it is simple. The worst form of cowardice is to be afraid of the truth. It would be presumptuous for one to say that if the Old Testament did not come into existence in the way he had thought, it therefore is not the Word of God. It does not become man so to limit the Almighty.

"Love's Faint Beginnings in Mankind"

The task that lies before us in the remainder of this chapter is to discover, if we can, what were the first portions of the Bible to come into existence. Where did the first tender shoots appear in what is now a field of ripened grain?

[3] *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament,* Driver, "Introduction," p. vi.

If one has thought that the Bible began with the books that at the present compose it, and in the form in which we now have them, he needs only to read his Old Testament a little more carefully to have this impression corrected. The Old Testament bears unmistakable testimony to the fact that before there was a Bible, a considerable body of religious literature had grown up among the Hebrew people. It had come out of the distant past, preserving the main lines of their history as well as expressing the first elements in their religious faith. The men who wrote the books of the Old Testament were very familiar with the earlier literature of their people, and they explicitly tell us that they made free use of it. They selected materials from many ancient sources, sifted them, added to them, welded them into a composite whole.[4]

Primitive people preserve their earliest traditions in two forms, song and story. These are first handed down

[4] The question of the early sources of Hebrew Literature is a very intricate one and can be treated here in a most elementary way only. The most obvious of these early sources named in the Old Testament are as follows: The Book of the Wars of Jehovah (Numbers 21:14); the Book of Jashar (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18); the Book of Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29); the Book of Nathan (1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29); the Book of Iddo (2 Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, 13:22); the Book of Jehu (2 Chronicles 20:34); the Book of Shemaiah (2 Chronicles 12:15); the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19); the Chronicles of King David (1 Chronicles 27:24); a Book of Proverbs compiled by the men of Hezekiah (Proverbs 25:1). There are innumerable other sources, though not specifically named, that can be traced in the Old Testament record.

orally from generation to generation, and then as the arts of civilization advance they are committed to writing. The beginnings of Hebrew literature followed the usual course. Just as centuries later the Son of God emptied himself and took upon himself the form of man, so in these times that lie on the far horizon of Israel's history God was descending to the level of his people and clothing his first revelations in songs and stories such as they could understand. It was necessary that he begin with them where they were. They were not yet ready for the Epistles of Paul or even the law of Moses. These early sources of song and story are easily distinguished in the older books of the Bible.

1. *Songs.* In the Revised Version of the Bible the early songs of the Hebrews are properly written in the form of verse, which makes them stand out clearly in the text. Among the earlier ones there is the Song of Lamech (Genesis 4 : 23, 24) ; the song of Esau (Genesis 27 : 39, 40) ; the Song of Moses (Exodus 15 : 1-18) ; the Song of Heshbon (Numbers 21 : 27-30) ; the Song of Deborah (Judges 5). These songs and others like them commemorated the exploits of Israel's heroes and told of Jehovah's providence and power.

We are expressly informed that there were two collections of Hebrew songs: The Book of the Wars of Jehovah (Numbers 21 : 14), and the Book of Jashar or the Upright (Joshua 10: 13; 2 Samuel 1: 18). "The titles convey to us the purpose with which such collections of national poetry were formed. Songs contained in the 'Book of the Wars of Jehovah' will have described how the Lord fought for Israel, and how truly Israel belonged to a

God who had done such great things for them. The songs contained in the 'Book of Jashar' (the upright) will have contained a series of pictures of great and upright men, judges, warriors, princes, measured by the best judgment of their time, but above all by the standard of the fear of Jehovah." [5]

It has been said that the Doxology sung by thousands of congregations each Lord's Day has been more effectual in teaching the Church the doctrine of the Trinity than all the sermons preached on that subject. The songs of ancient Israel did a like service for the people destined to be the religious leaders of mankind. Before there was a Bible shepherds sang these songs as they watched their flocks, families sang them by camp fires, tribes sang them at their festivals. The glow of religious fervor in them fanned the faith of the Hebrews. When, in after years, the Bible was written, some of the best of these songs were included in the story of God's progressive revelation.

2. *Stories.* Closely related to the songs of the Hebrews are the stories of their early heroes. The story of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham; the adventures of Esau and Jacob; the providence that overshadowed Joseph in a strange land—all these, and others of like nature, were a source of constant inspiration to the Hebrews. Fathers told them to their sons; those skilled in recitation no doubt repeated them around camp fires and at tribal festivals. Containing the kernel of a great faith, illustrating a most remarkable moral insight, cast into a form that cannot be surpassed in all the arts of story-telling, these ancient

[5] *The Canon of the Old Testament,* Ryle, p. 19.

stories not only inspired the ancient Hebrews, but they inspire us as well.

From Abraham to Moses there stretched a period of six hundred years. This exceeds by nearly two centuries the number of years since Columbus discovered America. During all of that period, and before it and after it, the Spirit of God was, through the religious songs and stories of a peculiar people, beginning to make straight the way for the coming of the Lord. He was beginning to bring order out of the spiritual chaos of mankind. As yet there was no Bible. The songs and stories of God's ancient people are as so many springs from which rise the tributaries of the broad stream of revelation. They are "love's faint beginnings in mankind."

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. Discuss the relation of the Hebrew people to the Bible.
2. Can the fact that they had an understanding of God far in advance of other peoples be explained on any natural ground? Give your reasons for your answer.
3. What is the one reasonable explanation?
4. In point of time which comes first, a knowledge of God or the Bible? When may we say the Bible began?
5. Where did many of our opinions as to how the Bible was compiled come from? What has been your idea? Does the truth of the Bible hinge upon any theory concerning the process of its growth?
6. How do we know that an earlier body of literature lay back of the Bible? Enumerate some of these sources named in the Bible. (Let the student at this point, before proceeding further, look up all the references in footnote on page 29.)
7. In what forms are the ideas of primitive people pre-

served? Why did God clothe his first revelations to man in these forms?

8. Name some of the early songs of the Hebrews found in the Bible.

9. What two collections of songs are mentioned? What do their names indicate as to the purpose of these collections?

10. How did the ancient songs and stories contribute to the religious life of the Hebrew people?

"The solitudes are indispensable to whomsoever God speaks. Moses was forty years in Midian, and then came the burning bush and the great deliverance. Our Lord was forty days in the wilderness before he began his public life. As soon as Paul was baptized he withdrew into the fastnesses of Arabia, and emerged three years later with Romans and Colossians and Ephesians in his heart."

"The man who does not believe that God can speak to him will not speak to God." PRINCIPAL FAIRBAIRN

"God is one, God is spirit, God is love, and God rules over all—these are the attributes of Jehovah as the Decalogue sets them forth; and in principle the whole higher life of humanity was sewed by the synthesis."

ANDREW HARPER.

"The peculiarity of the Bible religion is that in it this idea of the connection of religion with morality is the all-dominating one." JAMES ORR.

"We must observe, too, this remarkable fact: that the rapid moral growth of early Israel never runs away from the character of the national God. Other ancient nations achieved ethical progress at the expense of their religion. Their gods were left behind and laughed at as the conscience of the worshipers developed. But Jahweh was never found wanting by Israel, and never discredited by any new conception of truth or by any strange experience in their history. Every fresh moral ideal is confessed by the people as the impression of His character and will; and for each new problem raised by their contact with the world their faith in Him is found sufficient."

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

CHAPTER III

THE LAW

The Three Divisions of the Old Testament

The Hebrew Old Testament, like ancient Gaul, is divided into three parts. These divisions are not preserved in our English versions of the Bible, but if one will examine the Old Testament in the Hebrew, in which tongue it was originally written, he will discover that the books that make up the whole are separated into three distinct groups: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. In order to trace the growth of the Old Testament Canon it is of primary importance that we rediscover these lost divisions, and that we know what books belong in each. The following is the arrangement and order of the books of the Old Testament as they appear in Hebrew Bibles:

The Law, called also the Books of Moses and the Pentateuch, and consisting of the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Prophets, consisting of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets, the twelve being united in a single book by the ancient Hebrews.

The Writings, composed of Psalms, Proverbs, Job,

Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.[1]

This threefold division has been recognized by the Jews from the time the Old Testament Canon was completed to the present day. Jesus, who was a Jew and whose Bible was the Old Testament Scriptures, was mindful of these divisions, as his words clearly indicate. On a number of occasions he speaks of the Law (Matt. 5:18, Luke 16:17, etc.). Again he speaks of the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17, Luke 16:16). Once he spoke of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms or Writings[2] (Luke 24:44).

These three divisions are not a mechanical or fanciful arrangement. They preserve for us in general outline the story of the growth of the Old Testament. The first of them to be brought together in its present form and recognized as the Word of God was the Law. This was the first Hebrew Bible. Later the Prophetic Books were

[1] It will be observed that the order of the books differs from the order in the English version of the Old Testament. This change took place in the Greek translation of the Old Testament and the Christian Bible has followed the Greek rather than the Hebrew order. Originally 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles were each treated as one book. The division of each into two parts appears very early in the Christian Bible, but it was not adopted in the Hebrew Bible until the Sixteenth Century.

[2] "He singles out the Psalter, we may imagine, from among the other writings of this group, because the Messianic element in it was conspicuous, and because of all the writings outside the Law and the Prophets this book was the best known and had produced the deepest impression upon the religious feeling of the Jews." (Ryle.)

added, and the Hebrew Bible was thereby greatly enlarged and enriched. Finally a group of books called the Writings were admitted into the Hebrew Canon, and the Old Testament as we now have it was completed. The very structure of the Hebrew Bible clearly indicates the three stages of its growth. In the light of this witness which the Old Testament bears to itself we will consider each of the three divisions separately and in the order of their canonization.

The first is the Law. The five books that compose it are the first to greet us when we open our Bibles. Standing in this conspicuous place at the beginning of the Scriptures, they form, as it were, an imposing doorway into the Cathedral of Truth. God led his people through the doorway of the Law into the more spacious audience room of the Prophets, and on to the altar of Grace.

Laws Before Moses

It was pointed out in the preceding chapter that before the Bible was, the thoughts and deeds of the Hebrew people were preserved in songs and stories. These were transmitted from generation to generation, at first by word of mouth, later in written form, and finally the best of them were incorporated in the Hebrew Bible. In like manner the first laws of Israel date back to the age of the patriarchs, and earlier.

Among the laws of Israel which appear to have been observed from a very early time are the following: The law of the Sabbath (Gen. 2 : 1-3, 8: 10) ; rules of sacrifice (Gen. 15 : 10) ; the rite of circumcision (Gen.

17:9-27); the law of the tithe (Gen. 14:20); the law against murder (Gen. 9:6); the law against adultery (Gen. 39:7-12). God had prepared the way for an epoch-making time when the principles of righteousness should be more fully known. That epoch-making time was when Moses promulgated his laws among the Israelites.

God and a Man

"The history of the world," says Carlyle, "is the biography of great men." In the unfolding of God's purposes great men are indispensable. At every epoch in the world's history a conspicuous leader appears whose spirit is the candle of the Lord to light his fellows on the upward way. God opened the door of Salvation to the Gentiles through Paul. He accomplished the Reformation through Martin Luther, and the revival of the Eighteenth Century through John Wesley. The Hebrew Book of the Law is inseparably associated with Israel's great leader, prophet, and lawgiver—Moses.

About fourteen hundred years before Christ, Moses was born of slave parents in the land of Egypt.[3] In order that we may properly set him in the long course of human history, let us remember that he was born almost as many years before Christ as Christopher Columbus was born after Christ. By the happy intervention of providence Moses became the foster son of Pharaoh's daughter. His life falls within the era of Egypt's glory. The Pharaohs were building monuments and temples that are even to-day among the wonders of the world. Tut-ankh-amen, whose

[3] All dates prior to 1000 B.C. are uncertain. 1400 B.C. appears approximately correct.

tomb was recently opened, "was either a contemporary of Moses or else reigned in the age immediately preceding." The treasures discovered in these royal tombs bear silent testimony to the fact that at the time of Moses Egypt enjoyed a very high state of civilization. Since Moses was an adopted son of the royal family, he would be trained in the best learning of the day, and in the arts and sciences that made possible the pyramids, as well as in the law and literature of the nations. Josephus records that, while a young man, Moses led a successful military campaign against the Ethiopians. All of this was preparatory to the work God had called him to do.

Amid the splendors of Pharaoh's court Moses was nevertheless a Hebrew at heart.[4] He had no doubt learned from his mother and his sister-nurse the songs and stories of his people, for as yet there was no Bible. He shared their belief that they were a called people. One day he saw an Egyptian maltreating a fellow Hebrew, and he smote the offender dead. He fled for his life to Midian. There he lived under the shadow of Sinai.[5] The seclusion of a shepherd's life would afford him excellent opportunity for spiritual development as well as an opportunity to think through the laws which afterwards he delivered to Israel. His aloneness with God, his Egyptian training, and his Hebrew heart were important elements in these years of preparation. Finally, impelled by a divine call, he returned to Egypt and led his people across the Red Sea, into the wilderness, toward their fatherland, Canaan.

[4] Hebrews 11:24, 25.

[5] Sinai and Horeb are two names for the same mountain.

The Law of Moses

The record tells us that three months after their departure from Egypt the Israelites encamped at Mount Sinai. On the great plain at the foot of the mountain Moses delivered to his people a body of law that he had received from God, the content of which is preserved in Exodus 20-23. Israel was a new nation, recently emerged from Egyptian slavery. They were a people crushed by oppression, untrained, and loosely organized. Moses demonstrated his statesmanship as well as his prophetic power by promulgating a body of law to instruct his people in righteousness and to guide them in the administration of justice. Scholars are practically agreed that this is the oldest collection of laws in the Old Testament. It was of the nature of a constitution for the people of Israel, the heart and soul of the Law of Moses. The collection was called the Book of the Covenant,[6] and was the basis of the covenant relation between Israel and Jehovah. In the Book of the Covenant there is undoubtedly a body of Mosaic law that has come down to us from Israel's greatest lawgiver.

At this point let the reader lay down this volume and read carefully the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20-23). These chapters stand out in the narrative as a distinct body of law.

The regulations found here are plainly for a primitive order of society, such as existed among the Israelites immediately following their deliverance from Egypt. This

[6] Ex. 24:7.

fact assures us of the antiquity of the Book of the Covenant.

Some very remarkable things are evident on the face of the laws of this book. In the first place, they include the Ten Commandments, to this day the most wonderful summary of moral law the world has known. The ethical tone and the discriminating justice of the regulations that follow the Ten Commandments are none the less wonderful. They are the foundation and the model of the laws of all civilized nations. Even the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Ex. 21:23-25) was a great advance over the practice of the day. "It seems not to have meant not an eye shall be exacted, but *only* an eye shall be exacted."[7] This was the first step against personal retaliation and vengeance, and prepared the way for the law of Christ that enjoins us to love our enemies. Through the whole there breathes a religious spirit that distinguishes the Book of the Covenant from the laws of any other people of antiquity. They are from God. They are rooted and grounded in the holy character of God. Who breaks them offends God. These rules of right rested on eternal foundations, and they have proven their divinity through more than thirty centuries. Moses was God's great man to introduce a new era for Israel, which proved to be a new era for mankind.

The spirit of Moses permeates the first five books of the Old Testament, but it is difficult to single out the portions that come to us directly from him. Exodus 34:10-26 resembles very closely the Book of the Covenant. Leviticus 17-26 is a very old collection of laws,

[7] *Inspiration*, Sanday, p. 182.

and many of the regulations found there no doubt go back to the days of Moses. That the fundamental laws of Israel, which have become the fundamental laws of the civilized world, were promulgated by Moses we may believe on good evidence.

The principles and ideals of Moses, however, did not remain stationary. They were expanded by Israel's increasing understanding of the righteousness of God. They were applied to new conditions through the course of many centuries before the Pentateuch as we now have it was completed. God was not dependent upon Moses alone to make his righteousness known to the world. The seed sown by the hand of Moses has under God's providence grown into an abundant harvest. That harvest is the first five books of the Old Testament. But who can find at harvest time the seed that was sown in spring? No more can one separate the original law of Moses from the great body of law that has grown about it. The seed has given life to the whole—and has been lost in it. A conservative scholar gives admirable expression to his conclusions concerning Moses and the Law: "The text before us to-day is centuries younger than Moses—that cannot be denied. But Moses, whom we may believe as being doubtless acquainted with the art of writing, laid the foundation of this literary edifice. The generations after him have untiringly and in various ways collected the further material for the building—but the great strong spirit of the founder lives in the whole. This spirit is the binding strength which holds all the separate parts of such varied character together. Therefore we are to be understood, if we call the whole of the lofty edifice

after the man whose spirit dwells therein, when we speak of the Five Books of Moses." [8]

The Expansion of the Law [9]

An eminent lawyer is reported to have said recently that in the administration of the government of the United States the eighteen amendments to the Constitution play a larger part than the body of the Constitution itself. If one will carefully read the Constitution and the amendments thereto, he will feel the force of this remark. As our country has grown, and as our society has become more complex, new conditions have arisen, bringing in their wake new problems. All of these could not have been anticipated by our fathers when the Constitution was ratified in 1789. Therefore, in order to preserve the principles of liberty upon which the Republic was founded, it has been necessary to apply the spirit of the Constitution to new conditions as they have arisen. The amendments do not violate the fundamental theories of our fathers concerning free government, nor are they con-

[8] "The Five Books of Moses," by Max Loehr in the *Aftermath Series,* p. 381, edited by Bishop H. M. Du Bose.

[9] The first five books of the Bible are called in the Hebrew tongue the *Torah.* This word is translated "Law," but "Law" does not quite express all that is implied in the original. "Torah does not mean Law; it means Teaching and it includes (as understood by the Jews) all that God has *taught,* revealed to man in general as well as to Israel, through Moses." (R. Travis Herford in *The Menorah Journal,* April, 1925, p. 117.) In speaking of the first five books of the Bible as the Law we have in mind this larger meaning.

trary to the Constitution. They are simply the Constitution expanded and applied.

The expansion of the American Constitution is, in some measure, parallel to the expansion of the Law of Moses. The first five books of the Bible are, for the most part, the original law of Moses expanded and applied to the changing conditions in Israel's history.

Great ideas are charged with life. One cannot lay them away for safe keeping as he would a finished piece of statuary. The kernel of truth in them takes root and grows like the oak out of the acorn. This is particularly true of all vital religious ideas. Under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit the law of Moses grew into an extensive code. The Spirit did not quit Israel after Moses had departed. Between the time when Moses promulgated the laws of the "Book of the Covenant" and the time of Ezra, when the first five books of the Bible were finally cast into the form in which we now have them, there stretch more than eight centuries. Through all of these years—through the nation's establishment, expansion, division and fall, through her prosperity and poverty, through her sin and sorrow and shame—God's Spirit was adding line upon line and precept upon precept, ever in accord with the ageless principles of right laid down by Israel's peerless leader and lawgiver.

To trace in a general way the expansion of the law of Moses is the task before us in the following chapter.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. What are the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible? Name the books that fall in each. What is the Pentateuch?
2. On what occasions did Jesus speak of these divisions?
3. What do these three divisions tell us concerning the history of the Canon?
4. What laws were in existence before the time of Moses?
5. In what sense are great men indispensable in God's plan for the world?
6. What do we know of Egypt in the time of Moses? How did this contribute to preparing Moses for his life's work?
7. What was the advantage of Moses' sojourn in Midian?
8. What law was given by Moses at Sinai? Have you read the Book of the Covenant? What are its characteristics?
9. Is it possible to separate the contributions of Moses from the rest of the law? Explain and illustrate your answer.
10. In what sense may the first five books of the Bible be called the Five Books of Moses?

"But it is just this expansive property that is most characteristic of the Mosaic religion. It contains the germ of all the after-development, the promise of yet greater things to come."

WILLIAM SANDAY.

"The Bible situations are endlessly repeated because the Bible is not the detached achievement of a scholar's study, but the harvest of centuries of human life." JOHN WATSON.

"In their deepest abasement and humiliation the people of Israel never lose the assurance that from them the light is to go forth which shall illumine the darkness of the whole world—that the Gentiles shall come to their light, and kings to the brightness of their rising." JAMES ORR.

"Whether we read a hymn, or a narrative of the exploits of some old hero, or the cynical observations of one who from an actor in life has become a spectator and critic, or predictions of political revolutions, or the annals of the early kings of Israel and Judah—we find in all the same reverence of God, the same loyalty to him, the same confident expectation that he will one day judge the world in righteousness."

MARCUS DODS.

"By all that he requires of me
I know what God himself must be."

WHITTIER

CHAPTER IV

THE LAW (CONCLUDED)

From Moses to Josiah—How the Law Was Preserved and Expanded

It is recorded that after Moses had delivered the law to his people on the plains of Sinai he wrote down "the words of the Lord," and the Book was called "The Book of the Covenant" (Ex. 24:4, 7). Further on in Exodus we are told that Moses put the testimony (the two tables on which the Ten Commandments were written) in the ark (Ex. 40:20). The tables of stones were still in the ark when the temple was dedicated by Solomon (1 Kings 8:9). It appears that not only the Decalogue, but also other portions of the ancient law of Israel were preserved in the ark (Deut. 31:24-26). These scattered statements indicate that the statutes of ancient Israel were at an early date committed to writing and that they were preserved from generation to generation in the sanctuary. When one recalls the care of the Hebrews in preserving the records of their past, and the deep religious conviction that directed their every action, he is doubly assured that the Pentateuch[1] rests on solid historic foundations.

A second question commands our consideration. How

[1] From two Greek words meaning "five books," and accordingly a title applied to the five books of the Law.

did the Law, thus preserved in the Holy Place, increase in content through the years that lay between Moses and Josiah? Again we must go to the Bible, for the Bible is the best of all witnesses concerning itself.

In the book of Exodus an incident is recorded that throws considerable light on this question. Near the beginning of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness it is said that Moses sat all day to judge the people who came to him. (Ex 18:13-26). "When they have a matter they come to me," he said to his father-in-law, "and I judge between one and another to make them to know the statutes of God and his laws." It is evident that the people came to Moses to settle all manner of personal disputes, and all questions that might arise concerning the law of God. The work was too heavy for one man to perform. Able men were accordingly appointed to interpret and administer the law. Thus the process of expansion began. The administration of the Mosaic law necessitated that the general principles of the law be interpreted and applied to the many details of the people's life. Therefore, at a very early date the decisions of men led of God—prophets, priests, and judges—as they dealt with questions of the day, individual and national, became a part of the Mosaic legislation. It is a remarkable fact that through all this process of expansion the spirit of Moses was dominant. There was a power higher than man at work, making for righteousness.

This practice was continued in the age of the Judges. Deborah dwelt under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, and the Israelites came to her for her judgment (Judges 4:4, 5). Samuel traveled an appointed circuit,

judging his people (1 Sam. 7:16, 17). During the years of the monarchy the kings were also interpreters of the law. Solomon prayed for wisdom to judge his people rightly (1 Kings 3:9) and a very striking instance of his wisdom in judgment is recorded (1 Kings 3:16-28). The priests were likewise regarded as custodians of the law, and they exercised the sacred privilege of making decisions concerning it (Deut. 17:9-12). In particular the interpretation of the law concerning sacrifices and ceremonial cleanness lay within their province.[2] The judgments and decisions of the religious leaders of Israel were, we may assume, written down, and later generalized into statutes. These were considered, and very rightly, not to be the judgments of man but the judgments of God. They produced among the spiritually-minded of Israel an increasing consciousness of the righteousness of God, and an increasing conviction that his righteousness must be applied to all the details of the nation's life. By this process the original law of Moses had been considerably expanded by the time Josiah succeeded to the throne of Judah.

The Discovery of a Book

The year 621 B.C. marks an all-important event in the history of the Old Testament Canon. Josiah, a man

[2] It appears that the priests had for private use collections of rules concerning sacrifices as well as service books to direct them in the performance of their duties in the sanctuary. The contents of these books are preserved to us in the main in the ceremonial portions of the Law, notably in Leviticus and Numbers.

of good intentions, sat upon the throne of Judah. He had fallen upon evil times, for his grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon had given official sanction in Judah to the most abominable idolatries.[3] In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, while the temple was undergoing much-needed repairs, Hilkiah, the high priest, found somewhere in the temple's precincts a book which made a profound impression on him. He gave the book to Shaphan the scribe, who in turn took it to the king. The king was as deeply stirred as Hilkiah. He called together all the elders of Judah and instituted a sweeping reform throughout the kingdom. Heathen altars were torn down, idolatrous worship was suppressed, public worship was centralized in the temple at Jerusalem, wizards were expelled from the land. Before proceeding further with this story let the student read the account of Josiah's Reformation in 2 Kings 22-23.[4]

This is the first instance in the history of Israel where a book appears accepted by king, priest, and people as "supreme authority in all matters of religion and conduct." What book was this? It was an old book, as the circumstances surrounding its discovery clearly indicate. It contained laws which were recognized as being the laws of God, and for that reason it carried conviction to those who read. It could not have been the five books of the Law as we now have them, for the book was quickly read by the priest and scribe and king.[5] The message was

[3] See 2 Kings 21.

[4] For a parallel account see 2 Chronicles 34-35.

[5] The five books of the law in the Bible before the writer of these lines cover 157 closely printed pages, and it would

simple, direct, and quickly understood. The circumstances surrounding the reading of the book and the effect produced by it strongly indicate that the roll found by Hilkiah was the book of Deuteronomy. This is further substantiated by the fact that the reforms instituted by Josiah are all specifically required in Deuteronomy and in no other book of the Law, making the evidence most conclusive that Deuteronomy was the book found by Hilkiah in the temple.[6]

The word "Deuteronomy" literally means "a repetition of the law." The name in a measure explains the nature of this remarkable book. It is the fundamental law of Moses cast into popular form. It is a law book for the people. The law is not stated in formal regulations as in the "Book of the Covenant," but woven into an impassioned appeal. It reflects an order of society much more developed and complex than that of the tribes to whom the law was originally given on the plains of Sinai. That the substance of the law contained in Deuteronomy is from Moses, there can be no doubt. That a later hand

require at least twelve hours of continuous work to read the whole. It would require a considerably longer time to read it from rolls such as were used in copying books in ancient times.

[6] Four distinct reforms were instituted by Josiah, and it is interesting to note how strictly he follows the laws of Deuteronomy. All public worship is centralized in the temple at Jerusalem, and forbidden in the high places where an idolatrous priesthood officiated (Deut. 12:5, etc.); worship of the heavenly bodies is suppressed (Deut. 4:19, 17:3); the feast of the Passover is celebrated in accordance with the requirements of the law (Deut. 16:1-8); wizards are expelled from the land (Deut. 18:9-14).

arranged it in its present form is quite evident.[7] This is an outstanding instance of the law of Moses being expanded and applied to the changing conditions of Israel. The writer was no doubt relying on ancient documents, and he was likewise relying on the Holy Spirit to enable him to see the application of the law to the evils of his day. "There are references and allusions that suggest an ancient tradition of a final address of Moses, and perhaps a written account of its general purport."[8] With this material in hand and under the domination of the Spirit, the editor makes Moses speak not only to the Children of Israel on the border of Canaan, but to the rebellious people of the Kingdom of Judah as well.[9]

The reforms of Josiah did not save Judah. "The generation of Hilkiah had hardly passed away, when the deportation of the citizens of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple seemed to threaten the extinction of pure worship. But Josiah's reign had seen the dawn of that love and reverence for scripture with which the true Israelite, whether Jew or Christian, was destined ever afterwards to be identified. The coincidence is instructive. The collapse of the material house of Israel contained within it the seed of its spiritual revival in the possession of the indestructible word of God." [10]

[7] When this was done is still an open question. Ryle suggests, and not without reason, the age of Hezekiah, *Canon of Old Testament,* pp. 55-56.

[8] Harper on *Deuteronomy,* p. 32.

[9] For further discussion of the question of Deuteronomy see *Problems of the Old Testament,* James Orr, pp. 247-284; "Deuteronomy," by Harper, in *Expositor's Bible.*

[10] *Canon of the Old Testament,* Ryle.

The Law Edited

The first years of the sixth century B.C. witnessed a national calamity in the little Kingdom of Judah. In 586 B.C., less than a half a century after the discovery of the book of the law, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah [11] and Jerusalem was razed to the ground. The inhabitants of the land who had escaped the previous deportations were carried into exile in Babylon. The graves of their fathers, the homes of their children, the temple of their faith were laid desolate. The invaders put out the eyes of Zedekiah, the king, and carried him with the captives. Since that fateful day no man has sat upon the throne of David.

At the time of the Exile the kingdom of the Babylonians was at the height of its glory, and Babylon was the most imposing city of the East. The Hebrews, suddenly snatched from their native Judah and set in the midst of a pagan society, experienced a tremendous shock. They were by training and conviction an exclusive people, but by a sudden providence they had been thrust into the society of uncircumcised heathen. They were a proud people, but judgment had been visited upon them and their enemies were their masters. In Babylon there was no temple to witness Jehovah's favor, no sacrifice to expiate their sins, no yearly feasts to bring the faithful to the

[11] Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judea three times: 1. In 606 B.C. when he took into captivity Daniel and his companions (2 Kings 24: 1-4; Daniel 1: 1-7). 2. In 597 B.C. when the King Jehoiachin and 10,000 of the best inhabitants were taken (2 Kings 24: 11-16). 3. In 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Kings 25).

altars of their God. "They found themselves a forlorn handful of strangers in the midst of a teeming population; a certain number of them were sold as slaves; some were lost to sight in the mazes of the huge city; others were scattered here and there over immense plains watered by endless canals, on the willow-clad banks of which they sat down and wept." [12] It seemed that their nation had perished and with it the religion that Jehovah had entrusted to them.

Until the time of the captivity the principles of Moses had never been generally practiced by the Israelites, as the checkered history of that backsliding people clearly shows us. The prophets who had championed them, such as Elijah, Amos, and Isaiah, had met with the disfavor of king and people. The law of the Lord had fought a slow conquest even among the Chosen People. It appears that the Law was in the keeping of the prophets and priests and that the people generally were ignorant of it, just as the Bible was a closed book in Europe to all except the clergy until after the Reformation. The Hebrews were religiously a docile people and usually accepted the teachings of their scribes and doctors without question. The sacrifices, the feasts, the institutions of religion that centered about the temple had been to them a kind of visible word of the Lord. For these reasons the occasion had never arisen for editing the literature of Israel into a readable whole for the benefit of the people.

Conditions in Babylon, however, were very different. The props of the popular religion were gone—the temple, the sacrifices, the ark and the golden vessels, the priest-

[12] *A Short History of the Hebrews,* Ottley, p. 128.

hood, all. The exiles had lost many things that were dear to their hearts, but they carried with them into the strange land whither they went the book of Deuteronomy and the miscellaneous literature of Israel that had accumulated through the years—laws, histories, prophecies, songs, and the like. A wise Providence had taken from them the visible instruments of religion, in order that they might learn to love its invisible soul. They had lost much, but they had the word of the Lord. This was the one thing which was able to rise above the wreckage and give promise of a better day. By it the souls of a rebellious people were chastened. Following in its light they emerged with a more spiritual message for mankind.

> "Truth crushed to earth will rise again;
> The eternal years of God are hers."

The exiles naturally turned to their literature, wherein were enshrined the abiding principles of Israel's faith. The ideals and teachings of Moses and the prophets appealed to them as never before. It is a truism that a people in distress are more susceptible to moral and spiritual truth than a people in prosperity. They learned to love the Law, as they had loved the temple. They meditated on it day and night; they repented of their folly, and made a new covenant with Jehovah. Love for their sacred literature awakened unusual literary activity. There, in a strange land, the many fragments of the Law were brought together and, with Deuteronomy as a model, edited into a composite whole that could be understood by priest and people alike. The four books of the Law thus edited were grouped around Deuteronomy and the

result was the Pentateuch in the form we now have it. Who these editors were one cannot say. Possibly Ezekiel, the great prophet of exile, had a share in it. Most likely Ezra did. One thing is evident, the men who cast the law of Moses into its final form were inspired as were the men who wrote the original documents.

The Law Canonized

From the editing of the Law to its canonization was but a short step. It was late in the year 444 B.C. Nearly one hundred years before (536 B.C.) more than forty thousand exiles had been permitted to return to their native land. They had undertaken to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the temple amid many difficulties and discouragements. The work had lagged, and the walls had just been completed under the able leadership of Nehemiah.[13] The people were assembled "into the broad place that was before the water gate." (Neh. 8:1.) A man stood in a pulpit and read from a book. The man was Ezra, a scribe of no mean ability, and the book from which he read was the completed Law. As he read he paused to explain the meaning of the Law so that all could understand. The people were profoundly stirred. On the following day the reading was resumed, Ezra reading the portion giving directions for the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Feast was immediately called, and during the seven days of the feast Ezra continued to

[13] For a full account of the dismal years between the return of the exiles and the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem the reader is referred to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

read from the book. (Neh. 8:18.) Two days after the Feast of the Tabernacles was ended a solemn fast was proclaimed. On that eventful day, following the prayer of Nehemiah, the convenant was renewed between Israel and Jehovah. The law was formally received as the authoritative word of God in matters of faith and conduct, and the people were pledged to obedience. (Neh. 9.) The covenant was signed by the leaders and representatives of the Jews—men whose works are unknown to us other than they set their seal upon the Books of the Law, and so set them apart as the Canon of Scripture. (Neh. 10:1-27.)

This was a notable event. The Jews emerged from exile with a book. The first section of God's revelation had through the vicissitudes of the years and the leadership of the Spirit been completed. From this time a book, recognized as containing a divine message, guided the faithful in their quest for God. Perhaps it did not come into existence by just the process we would have chosen. What matters it? Nothing but the overruling purpose of God could have wrought this body of truth out of the travail of the years, and unified its many parts into a consistent whole.

Apart from all questions of their gradual development the books of the Law bear the unmistakable marks of divinity. An indescribable element, which the devout reader cannot miss, distinguishes them from all secular literature. To the writer Genesis has seemed a book of spiritual astronomy. It deals with subjects as vast as the universe. It scales the heavens and measures the greatness of Jehovah. Exodus tells a story of divine

providence that moves the heart to trust in Israel's God. Even in the bloody chapters of Leviticus and Numbers the writer has found under the "costly folds of rite and ceremony" the fundamental principles of redemption and fellowship, and by them he has been helped to find his way to Calvary. Deuteronomy speaks with the impassioned voice of a prophet concerning the authority, the holiness, the love of God, and by so much anticipates the Prophet of Nazareth. The whole Law lays the broad foundations of revelation, and foreshadows greater things to come. It is, as Paul said, our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. (Gal. 3:24.)

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. What evidences have we in the Bible that portions of the law were committed to writing at a very early date?
2. Why was it necessary that the original principles of the law be expanded? Explain the process of expansion. Illustrate from the life of Moses and others.
3. Under what circumstances was a book of the law discovered in the temple? Have you read 2 Kings 22-23?
4. What book was discovered by Hilkiah? What evidence justifies this conclusion?
5. Describe the general character of Deuteronomy.
6. When and by whom were the deportations of the Jews to Babylon accomplished? Describe their situation in exile.
7. Why was there no earlier demand for editing the laws of Israel into a readable whole? Why did exile move Israel to love the Word?
8. Describe the events that led to the canonization of the law.

"Behold yon sterile spot
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert blast;
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory."

SHELLEY.

"The greatness of the sacred historian of the Kings consists in his firm grasp of the principle that God is the controlling power and sin the disturbing force in the entire history of men and nations."

F. W. FARRAR.

"For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth—Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name."

AMOS 4: 13.

"We never hear of a prophet *volunteering* for his mission. It is laid upon them as a necessity from which they struggle to escape in vain."

SANDAY.

CHAPTER V

THE PROPHETS

THE second portion of the Hebrew Bible, which was also the second portion to be admitted into the Canon, is "The Prophets." The prophetic section of the Hebrew Bible is subdivided into two parts, as follows:

1. *The Former Prophets:* Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.[1]

2. *The Latter Prophets:* "The three great prophets"—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—and the twelve "minor prophets," Hosea to Malachi.[2]

It will be observed that the first of these subdivisions of "The Prophets" preserves the history of the Hebrew people from the conquest of Canaan under Joshua to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and that the second preserves the messages of the outstanding prophets of Israel and Judah. It is necessary, for the sake of clearness, to consider them separately.

THE FORMER PROPHETS

When the Hebrew people went into exile they carried with them not only miscellaneous rolls of their law, but they carried also the record of their nation's history. A great people invariably honor their past. They recog-

[1] In the Hebrew Bible Ruth and Daniel do not appear in "The Prophets," but in "The Writings."

[2] The twelve minor prophets were originally united in a single book, and were counted as one book in the Hebrew Canon.

nize their greatness as being rooted in the past. This would be particularly true of a people in whose history the hand of God had been so singularly manifest.

The vanquished are usually more careful to preserve their history than the victorious. When a people's institutions have been wrecked, the ideals which they enshrined become doubly dear to them. To the exiles of Babylon it seemed for a time that the things for which Israel had stood were a "lost cause." The plaintive notes of one of the psalmists reveals the exiles' distress of soul:

> "By the waters of Babylon,
> There we sat down, yea, we wept
> When we remembered Zion.
> Upon the willows in the midst thereof
> We hanged up our harps."[3]

Under these circumstances the captives turned to a study of Israel's past. The record was lit with a new glory. They cherished the story of Jehovah's long suffering with Israel as they had not done in the days of the nation's prosperity and arrogance. As they were moved to save out of the wreckage the word of the law, so were they also moved to preserve for generations to come the history of God's dealings with his people.

The six historical books that in the Hebrew Bible are designated the "former prophets" were, we are told by the best scholars, compiled in their present form during the

[3] Psalm 137 was no doubt written by one of the exiles. It portrays his undying love for his native land and all her institutions. In all literature there is no pathos more eloquent.

days of the exile.[4] This does not mean, however, that the history of Israel had been lost, and that the story told in these books is an idealized fiction of later date. The materials that were brought together in these books had been preserved out of the past.[5] For instance, it is recorded that Moses wrote down the itinerary of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they had encamped on the plains of Moab (Num. 33). By the aid of the Mosaic record the journey through the wilderness can be traced to this day, which is indicative of its historical accuracy. In the courts of the Kings of Israel and Judah the recorder of events occupied a prominent place,[6] and the court records were frequently referred to by the compilers of Kings. "The writing of history was one of the functions of the prophetic order, and that order was recruited by a constant succession from Samuel to Malachi."[7] The name "former prophets," applied to the historical books, is accounted for in large measure by the fact that the prophets were from a very early period the accredited historians of Israel.

All of these sources were available to the later historians, who compiled the books of the "former prophets" in the form in which they now appear. In this process of editing sometimes a large section was transcribed from an old record; again many sources were carefully cor-

[4] *Canon of the Old Testament,* Ryle, pp. 107-109.

[5] "In general it is not denied that the historical books are compilations, for the most part, from older writings." (*The Problem of the Old Testament*, James Orr, p. 381.)

[6] 2 Samuel 8:16; 1 Kings 4:3; 2 Kings 18:18; etc.

[7] *Inspiration,* by Sanday, p. 157.

related. 2 Kings ends with an incident that occurred about 560 B.C., twenty-four years before the first return of the Jews from captivity. Since this is the termination of an ordered history from the conquest of Canaan to the exile, we may assume that the compilation of the historical books was completed about this time.

The remarkable fact about the history of Israel as told in the books of the "Former Prophets" is that God is the central figure in the entire story. Most national histories are materialistic to the core—a record of wars, of the expansion of territory, and increases in population and wealth.[8] If the history of America were written from faith's point of view, interpreting how God had established here an asylum for the oppressed of earth, had blessed us with great material wealth, called us to hold aloft the torch of liberty and peace and godliness for the nations of the earth, we would have a history very different from the monotonous tale of tariff and gold and gunpowder. Bismarck very truly said that the chief thing to be considered in national affairs is the "character of the cards Providence holds in the game"—a thing, alas, too often overlooked by our historians.

The history of Israel was written with supreme reference to the nation's relation to God. This is the only true philosophy of history. The inspiration of Israel's

[8] Very significant are the words of J. R. Green in his preface to *A Short History of the English People:* "Whatever the worth of the present work may be," he says, "I have striven throughout that it should never sink into a 'drum and trumpet' history. It is the reproach of historians that they have too often turned history into a mere record of the butchery of men by their fellow men."

historians was their God-given ability to see the divine purpose at work in the nation's life. The historical books are therefore supplementary to the Pentateuch, showing how the law was operative in a people's history. They are the voice of God speaking to us through the rise and fall of the Hebrew nation. They are the law translated into action.

The Latter Prophets and Their Work

The Old Testament prophets have possibly been more generally misunderstood than any other Biblical characters. They have commonly been thought of as mysterious persons whose work was to foretell what was to come to pass—a race of superhuman magicians with an uncanny insight into the future. That there was a predictive element in their messages cannot be denied.[9] Their prophecies concerning the Messiah argue an inspired insight into the far-reaching purposes of God. They were not, however, so much foretellers as forthtellers. The immediate task before them was to rebuke the sins of their contemporaries and to establish the rule of God in the world. They were mighty preachers of righteousness to their day and generation, and the books of the "latter prophets" are collections of their deliverances. The most illustrious men of Israel were not her kings or priests, but her prophets. The highest conception of the nature of God and the duty of man to be found in the Old Testament is in the messages of the proph-

[9] For an excellent discussion of this matter see *The Problem of the Old Testament,* James Orr, pp. 451-465.

ets. They are the high water mark of religion before the appearing of Christ. Like lonely peaks rising abruptly above the range and touched by the first rays of the morning sun, the Old Testament prophets stand upon the far horizon catching the radiant light of God's revelation before it had flooded the valley beneath. They were seers, preachers, prophets, interpreters of the ways of God with men.

The great prophets of Israel whose messages are preserved in the Old Testament were preceded by a long line of prophets. The prophetic office dates back to Moses, who was considered to be the first of the prophets. Balaam was a prophet in the days of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness (Num. 22-24). Deborah was a prophetess in the days of the Judges (Judges 4, 5). Samuel was a prophet and had under him a school of prophets (1 Sam. 10:5). Nathan was a prophet and in the days of David it was he who fearlessly rebuked the adulterous king for his sin. Elijah was a prophet in the stormy days of Ahab, and his deliverances in the ears of an idolatrous people were like bolts of lightning (1 Kings 17 ff.). There were in Israel innumerable prophets whose names are unknown. (See 1 Kings 18:4.) The messages of these earlier prophets are not preserved, however, save in the abbreviated accounts of them appearing in the historical books. But between Elijah and Amos, a period of about one hundred years, there appears to have developed among the Hebrews a reading public, and from that time the messages of the most conspicuous prophets were committed to writing.

There are fifteen books of the Latter Prophets in the

Old Testament, and it is impossible within the limits assigned this volume to trace the origin of each. The two earliest of the written prophecies are treated somewhat in detail. These will serve in a general way to illustrate the rise of the great prophets in Israel.

The Rise of the Written Prophecies

In the first half of the eighth century B.C. there appeared in Israel [10] an unusual man with an unusual message. He was not a scholar, but a plain man who spoke boldly out of his heart. The man was Amos, a shepherd of Tekoa, and the book which bears his name is the oldest of the latter prophets.

A prophet learns his message in the secret places of his soul and amid his daily contacts. Amos was a native of a wild country in the south of Judah skirting the wilderness in which the Israelites wandered for forty years. Amid the perils to which he and his flocks were constantly exposed he was trained to be on the alert for every kind of foe. Storms were frequent in this desert country. Winds and thunder could but impress the solitary Amos with the majesty of God. There was scant vegetation in Tekoa, little to please the eye, and no chance for luxury. The severities of life usually bring one nearer God than comforts do. Away from the glamour of the city and amid the simplicities of nature Amos lived alone with God, as Moses had done in Midian. To him the most real fact in

[10] After the division of the kingdom of the Hebrews in the unfortunate reign of Rehoboam, the northern kingdom was called Israel and the southern Judah.

the world was God. In the naked forces of nature he daily saw the power of the Almighty, and in the secret places of his heart he daily heard the voice of the Most High. There were no polite artificialities in his religion. His was the simple faith of a plain man.

This plain, sunburnt son of the desert was accustomed to go to Bethel, a city of northern Israel, possibly for the purpose of selling the increase of his flocks. His discerning mind saw through the shams of the city's life. In Bethel he found much of the paraphernalia of religion, but little vital faith. He was deeply stirred by the insincerity, the vanity, the sensuousness of the city's social life, by the injustices of the courts, by the gnawing poverty and the prodigal luxury that flourished side by side. He was shocked as Luther was shocked when he visited Rome and witnessed the insincerity of the Church. He spoke the things that were in his heart, as all true prophets must. Fortunately his spoken messages (possibly delivered on the streets of Bethel) are preserved to us. They are aflame with an exalted conception of the righteousness of God. They throb with the conviction that no nation or institution that is contrary to the righteousness of God can survive. Though delivered at a particular time in Israel's history, they are nevertheless timeless. After twenty-seven centuries one feels the weight of their authority. God was speaking through Amos to Bethel—and to the world.

Following shortly after Amos, Hosea appeared in Israel.[11] His temper of mind and message stand in

[11] George Adam Smith assigns the ministry of Amos to 759-745 B.C. and Hosea 743-737 B.C.

striking contrast to Amos. He did not live in the seclusion of the wilderness, but his was

> "A house by the side of the road,
> Where the race of men go by."

He had a domestic mind. With the exception of the parables of Jesus there are nowhere in the Bible such exquisite pictures of the home life of the Hebrews as in the figures of Hosea. The pages of his book are like a panorama of ancient Galilee. The dew is on the grass, the baker is busy with the oven, the smoke is curling from the chimney, the lilies are in bloom. These figures and many others reflect the home-loving heart of Hosea. He had discovered something about God which Amos had not found. He learned it not in the loneliness of the wilderness, but in a domestic tragedy.

When he was a young man he wooed the heart of a maiden named Gomer, and married her. Gradually the fact too awful to admit to himself dawned upon him, that Gomer was an unfaithful wife. He carried in his heart a gnawing sorrow too deep for words. He tried to conceal her shame. Three children were born to her and none of them were his own. Eleven tragic years went by in mournful file. At last, driven by him or of her own volition, she went away from the home that he had prepared for her into a life of unspeakable shame! Broken was the troth she gave! Broken were the vows of love! A brokenhearted man sat alone in his house in Galilee with three children which were not his own. (See Hosea 1 and 3.)

But notwithstanding his disappointment and sorrow,

Hosea loved Gomer. "Love suffereth long, and is kind." He had loved her in the innocency of her maidenhood, and now he loved her in her shame. He went out to find her, like the shepherd for the lost sheep. He found her on the shambles of the city being sold to a life of shame, as was the custom of that day. He bought her for fifteen pieces of silver and an homer and a half of barley. He took her back to his home. Not this time to a place of honor and trust as before. The old stain must be blotted out, the old life must be lived down. He takes her home to discipline her in virtue's ways.

"Weeping blind tears
I took her to myself and paid the price
(Strange contrast to the dowry of her youth
When first I wooed her); and she came again
To dwell beneath my roof. Yet not for me
The tender hopes of those departed years,
And not for her the freedom and the love
I then bestowed so freely. Sterner rule
Is needed now. In silence and alone,
In shame and sorrow, wailing, fast and prayer,
She must blot out the stains that made her life
One long pollution."

Out of this experience Hosea emerged with a new understanding of God. God had loved Israel as Hosea had loved Gomer, and Israel, like Gomer, had broken her troth with God which she had made in holy covenant. Divine love was following Israel to the shambles of her shame to woo her back to virtue and to God. With this background Hosea preaches the imperishable Gospel of divine love—the Gospel which shone in its perfect splendor when for love's sake God gave his Son.

Amos and Hosea introduce the era of written prophecy, and they also bring to the fore the two fundamentals of religion on which their successors in the prophetic office builded: the righteousness of God and the love of God. They are not the greatest of the prophets, but they are the most representative. They are the key by which all prophets may be interpreted, for they all spoke out of their experience, and out of their divinely illumined minds to the men of their generation.

Isaiah's brilliant ministry falls in the last half of the eighth century.[12] Jeremiah, whose messages portray a brokenhearted man, labored about a century later, when the approaching fall of Jerusalem was evident, and near the end of his ministry witnessed the deportation of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel is the prophet of the Exile, going with his people to Babylon and in that strange land encouraging them to believe in the righteousness of Jehovah and the restoration of Jerusalem. As the three major prophets, so also the twelve minor prophets appeared among the Hebrews in like manner and with like messages.

In collecting and preserving the messages of the prophets in the written form it appears that their disciples had a large part. The prophecies of Jeremiah were dictated by Jeremiah to his disciple Baruch. (Jer. 36:1-4.) Isaiah was commanded, "Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law (teaching) among my disciples." (Isa. 8:16.) The prophets were not popular in their day, and we assume

[12] B.C. 740-701. Chapters 40-66 were probably added later, being the work of a great prophet who lived among the Hebrews during the period of exile, more than a hundred years later.

that their messages were originally collected for the private use of their disciples and in order to extend their influence through a reading public. It remained for a later age to give them a place in the Canon.

The Canonization of the Prophets

Until the time of the exile the popular religion of the Hebrews centered around the temple, the sacrifices, and the priesthood. When the Jews were deported to Babylon and could no longer depend on these institutions of their religion, a more democratic institution arose which was destined to supersede them. That institution was the synagogue. "That synagogues originated during, or in consequence of the Babylonish captivity, is admitted by all." (Edersheim.)[13] It was an assembly of believers for worship and instruction in the Law. The leaders in the synagogue were not *priests,* but *teachers.* Its purpose was not the performance of an elaborate ritual, but instruction in the Word of God. The most prominent feature in the synagogue service was the reading and expounding the Law. The five books of the Law were divided into lessons to be read consecutively on the days of worship, just as the Book of Common Prayer has appointed Scripture lessons for each day in the year. It was patent to the devout Jew that the Prophetic Books

[13] "Synagogue" is from two Greek words meaning "a bringing together" or "an assembly." Our word "congregation" is the Latin rendering of the Greek "synagogue." The Christian congregation of worshipers (the Church) is modeled after the synagogue rather than after the temple.

were the best of all interpretations of the principles of the Law. They breathed a soul into the statutes of Moses. The Former Prophets were the Law in action: the Latter Prophets were the Law interpreted by the somber warnings and the impassioned appeal of the preacher. Therefore, the Prophets came to be considered as a kind of appendix to the Law, and were read in the service for the purpose of illustrating and interpreting the Law. It is likely that reading certain portions of the Prophets in the synagogue service was the first step toward elevating them to a place in the Hebrew Canon.

The process was gradual, and one cannot definitely designate the time when "The Prophets" were admitted into the Canon. One may, however, put many things together and arrive at an approximate date. In the days of Jesus "The Prophets" were read in the synagogue as Scripture. (Luke 4:16-21.) On several occasions He spoke of "the Law and the Prophets." It is therefore conclusive that the second section of the Hebrew Bible had been recognized as Holy Scripture before the beginning of the Christian era. Going further back, the Book of Daniel, written about 165 B.C., refers to Jeremiah as among the books evidently regarded as Scripture. (Dan. 9:2.) The thread of evidence runs further back. In the Old Testament Apocrypha there is a book called Ecclesiasticus,[14] written about 190 B.C. by Jesus the son of Sirach. The writer makes reference to the Books of the Prophets, and appears to regard them as, next to the

[14] This must not be confused with Ecclesiastes of the Old Testament.

Law, worthy of his veneration.[15] In the light of these and other ancient testimonies it is generally conceded that the Canon of the Prophets was formed shortly before 200 B.C. "Having first been added as a kind of appendix to the Law, 'the prophets' had gradually grown in estimation. . . . Before the close of the third century B.C. they ranked as Scripture after 'the Law,' and above all other writings." [16]

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. What books made up the divisions of the Hebrew Bible called "The Prophets"? How are these subdivided?
2. How did the exile of the Hebrews enhance their appreciation of their national history?
3. When were the Former Prophets compiled in their present form? How had the history of Israel been preserved to this time? What is the striking fact about the history of the Hebrew people as told by the Former Prophets? Expand and illustrate this idea.
4. What was the work of the Old Testament prophets? How have they been commonly misunderstood?
5. Name some of the greater Hebrew prophets who labored before the day of the Latter Prophets.
6. Who were the earliest of the Hebrew prophets whose messages are preserved in the books of the Latter Prophets?"

[15] See Ecclesiasticus 46-49. The following quotations are particularly suggestive: "Isaiah . . . saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass, and he comforted them that mourned in Zion." "Jeremiah was a prophet sanctified in his mother's womb." "It was Ezekiel who saw the glorious vision." "The twelve prophets comforted Jacob, and delivered them an assured hope."

[16] *Canon of the Old Testament*, Ryle, p. 123.

Describe the spirit and experience of the two, and contrast their messages. Have you ever read Amos and Hosea?

7. What is meant by the statement that these two are representative of all the prophets?

8. How did the prophetic books aid in interpreting the Law? Describe the process by which they came to be recognized as a part of the canon.

9. What fact helps to fix the date of their admission into the Canon? What is the approximate date of their admission?

"O vain deluding world! whose largest gifts
Thine emptiness betray, like painted clouds,
Or wat'ry bubbles; as the vapor flies,
Dispersed by lightest blasts, so fleet thy joys,
And leave no trace behind. This serious truth
The royal preacher loud proclaims, convinced
By sad experience; with a sigh repeats
The mournful theme, that nothing here below
Can solid comfort yield; 'tis all a scene
Of vanity."

(*From an old metrical translation of Ecclesiastes. Translator unknown.*)

"The Book of Psalms contains the whole music of the heart of man, swept by the hand of his Maker. In it are gathered the lyric bursts of his tenderness, the moan of his penitence, the pathos of his sorrow, the triumph of his victory, the despair of his defeat, the firmness of his confidence, the rapture of his assured hope. In it is presented the anatomy of all parts of the human soul; in it, as Heine says, are collected 'sunrise and sunset, birth and death, promise and fulfillment—the whole drama of humanity.'"

ROLAND E. PROTHERO.

"If the history is the body of the Old Testament religion, the Psalms and the Prophets may be said to be its soul."

JAMES ORR.

"The prophets do not merely foretell history, they also *interpret* it. And the Book of Daniel does this on a more comprehensive scale than any other prophetic book. It outlines a religious philosophy of history. It deals, not with a single empire, but with a succession of empires, showing how all form parts of the whole, ordained for prescribed terms by God, and issuing the results designated by Him."

S. R. DRIVER.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRITINGS

Hebrew Literary Customs

The reader has no doubt observed ere this that the question of the date and authorship of the books of the Old Testament is exceedingly complicated. This is due in large measure to the fact that the ancient Hebrews were not governed by the literary customs that have been developed in the Western World. The claims of authorship are sacred with us, but this was not so with them. They exercised a literary liberty that is foreign to our manner of thinking. One writer did not hesitate to add to the work of another, or to incorporate the work of another in his own. This he did with no thought of plagiarism, but simply as following a common custom which was universally regarded as perfectly legitimate. Sometimes one would write in the name of another, usually some well-known character of the past. The Holy Spirit did not set aside the literary customs of the day when He led men of old to write the thoughts of God. The Bible is a Divine-human book—a divine message cast in human mold. The matter of authorship does not bring in question the integrity of the Bible. It is simply a question of ancient literary custom and practice, and in no sense invalidates the Word of God which standeth sure.

The problems of date and authorship, present everywhere in the Old Testament, come particularly to the

fore in "The Writings," the third and last division of the Old Testament Canon.

"The Writings"—A Miscellaneous Collection

"Of making many books there is no end." (Eccles. 12:12.) These words make passing mention of a very important fact concerning the period of Hebrew history that lies between the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the birth of Christ. The Babylonian exile gave great impetus to the literary activity of the Jews. Impelled by a desire to preserve the religion of their fathers, stimulated by their contacts with the civilizations of the Chaldeans and Persians and later of the Greeks, they produced a considerable body of literature. Being preëminently a religious people, their minds turned to the high themes of religion. The Hebrew Bible by no means includes all that they wrote. The books that make up the Old Testament were by the process of selection separated from a much larger collection and judged to be worthy of a place in the Hebrew Canon.

After the Canon of the Prophets had been concluded it was apparent that there was other sacred literature among the writings of the Jews "given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16), and therefore meriting a place among the inspired books of the Hebrew Bible. The process of selection was accordingly continued.[1] As a result a group of thirteen books called "The Writings" was in time added to the

[1] One cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that the selection as well as the production of the books of the Old Testa-

Hebrew Canon: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

As the title applied to this division of the Old Testament indicates, "The Writings" is a miscellaneous collection. Some of the books included in this division are written in poetry, others in prose.[2] Some of them relate the facts of Israel's history, as Chronicles and Nehemiah; others are highly imaginative, as the Song of Solomon; others grapple with the baffling question of man's existence, as, Job and Ecclesiastes; and one, the Book of Psalms, is a hymn book. They present many phases of Hebrew religious thought. So diversified are they in form, point of view, and content, that no single word is truly descriptive of them all, therefore they are designated by the very general title, "The Writings."

The subdivisions of "The Writings" and the order in which the books are arranged vary considerably in the different manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. No attempt is made here to discover the original subdivisions, if indeed there was ever a fixed order.

A Hymn Book

Christianity and Judaism are the only religions that sing. This fact speaks eloquently of the deep spiritual

ment was the work of the Spirit of God. This fact will be more fully developed in the following chapter.

[2] Five books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew poetry, and all of them are among the Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations. In the Revised Versions of the Bible they are properly arranged in verse.

satisfactions in God's age-long revelation of himself as recorded first in the Old Testament and then in the New. Only that faith which sets the heart of man in harmony with the eternal heart of God has inspired man to praise his Maker with the sweet harmonies of voice and instrument. "The Psalter," it has been said, "may be regarded as the heart's echo to the speech of God."

The Psalms, as every Bible student knows, are the hymnbook of the Hebrew people. A people's songs portray their inmost thoughts and feelings more vividly than any other form of their literature. In some particulars the Psalter reveals the faith of Israel as no other book of the Old Testament. What understanding of God, what appreciation of his will and purpose, what intimacy of communion inspired the Hebrews to sing Jehovah's praises! The Psalms were wrought by the Holy Spirit out of the religious experience of Israel's great poets. They were sung by temple choirs, by homesick exiles in Babylon, by reapers in the field, by mothers to their children, and thus became the medium through which the Hebrews breathed their hearts' faith. The Psalter was one of the favorite Old Testament books with Jesus. (He quotes oftenest from Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah.) It alone of all the books of the Hebrew Bible is added as a kind of appendix to editions of the New Testament, which fact illustrates its singular influence in the Christian Church.

The name of David is inseparably associated with the Psalter, but one must not conclude from this that David wrote all of the Psalms, or even most of them.[3] David

[3] The title appearing at the beginning of each psalm is not

was a musician and one of the first composers of sacred Psalms in Israel. He gave great impetus to sacred music in his reorganization of the temple service. (1 Chron. 16:4 ff.) For these reasons David's name was linked with the whole Psalter, but David was not the author of all the Psalms any more than John and Charles Wesley wrote all the hymns in the old Wesleyan Hymn Book.

When and how the Psalms of Israel were brought together into the most wonderful of all hymn books it is impossible definitely to determine. The growth of the Psalter no doubt centered about the temple, where psalms were collected for the worship of Jehovah. It appears that in the days of Hezekiah certain men interested themselves in picking out the Psalms of David and Asaph from the sheets of temple music. (2 Chron. 29:30.) A great many of the Psalms were written during the period of the exile and later, as their tone and substance strikingly indicate,[4] and some of them possibly as late as the persecutions of Antiochus in the third century B.C.[5] Before the finished Psalter appeared the Psalms of Israel had been collected into five little hymn books. For the purpose of worship these five were later brought together into one great hymn book, which is the Psalter as we have it. The limits of these five original books are indicated in the Hebrew Bible and in our revised versions, each book ending with a benediction cast in much the same form.[6]

a part of the original Psalm, but a note added by an editor at a much later date.

[4] For example, Psalms 126 and 137.

[5] Possibly Psalms 74, 79, 83.

[6] The whole of Psalm 150 is supposed to be the benediction for the last book.

The whole includes the songs of inspired souls through a period of about eight hundred and fifty years, and that in part accounts for their remarkable richness and variety.

Three Wisdom Books

Amid the rich variety of literature found in "The Writings" there are three books commonly called the Wisdom Books—Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. The wise men among the Hebrews were a distinct order of thinkers and teachers, and their presence is noted along the course of Israel's history.[7] They were not so prominent as the prophets, nor was their message as inspiring. They nevertheless made a real contribution to Hebrew literature. As the prophets are called the great *preachers,* the wise men might be called the *philosophers* of Israel. "They took for granted the main postulates of Israel's creed, and applied themselves to the observation of human character, seeking to analyze conduct, studying action in its consequences, and establishing morality, upon the basis of principles common to humanity at large. On account of their prevailing disregard of the national points of view, and their tendency to characterize and estimate human nature under the most general aspects, they have been termed, not inappropriately, the *Humanists* of Israel." [8]

[7] See 2 Samuel 14:2 ff.; 1 Kings 4:31; Jeremiah 18:18; Proverbs 24:23, etc. Pharaoh had his wise men (Ex. 7:11). Wise men came from the East on the occasion of the Saviour's birth.

[8] *Introduction to Literature of the Old Testament,* Driver, p. 393.

Their large view of humanity, independent of national limitations, served to prepare the way for the universality of the Gospel of Christ.

Solomon was considered the greatest of wise men, and his name was indelibly stamped upon the Book of Proverbs. That he is not the author of it all, the book itself distinctly bears witness. (Prov. 30:1.) The book is divided into eight unequal parts.[9] These were separate collections of proverbs later brought together in one book, as in the case of Psalms. How many of these were written by Solomon it is impossible to determine. We are assured by the compiler of Kings that he was distinguished for his wise sayings. (1 Kings 4:32.) To the proverbs written by him other proverbs and collections of proverbs were added by succeeding generations and thus the book of Proverbs which we know came into existence. It is made up of practical precepts to guide one in the pursuit of the best things.

Job is written in the form of a dramatic poem. It deals with one of the most vexing questions of human life—why do good men suffer? The debate continues long between Job and his friends. When this most remarkable book of the Wisdom Literature was written has long been a matter of dispute. The question with which it deals at least suggests that the book grew out of the suffering of the exiles when many of the righteous in distress of soul asked why the Lord had so visited them.

Ecclesiastes is a book written by a keen observer of life, but one withal who was depressed by the monotony,

[9] These divisions are indicated in the revised versions of the Bible by short blank spaces.

the injustice, and the apparent aimlessness of man's existence. The political and social conditions which it portrays, as well as its language, indicate that it was written at a late date, possibly during the third century B.C. It represents a period of intellectual questioning. The author of this strange but wonderfully fascinating little book puts his thoughts into the mouth of Solomon, the king whose career was the most forceful illustration of the vanities of human life. This is a legitimate literary device. Hamlet speaks eloquently in his soliloquy on human existence, but the reader is aware all the while that the Prince of Denmark is giving utterance to Shakespeare's thoughts.

One phrase, frequently repeated in Ecclesiastes, is the key to the message of the book. The phrase "under the sun" occurs twenty-seven times. The author looks under the sun, not above it. In other words, he has an earthly point of view. He sees things *horizontally,* not *perpendicularly.* He arrives at the best philosophy of life possible for one who so examines the question of man's sojourn upon the earth. He does not rise to the spiritual plane of Isaiah and Paul, but his incurable pessimism, his awful silences, teach us that one cannot know the ultimate meaning and promise of human life until by faith he sees above the sun—until the revealing light of heaven dispels the somber shadows of earth. The author's examination of things "under the sun," however incomplete, leads him nevertheless to an overwhelming sense of the reality of God, and at the end of his treatise on the vanity of life he arrives at a great conclusion: "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccles. 12:13.)

Six Historical Books

Of the other books in "The Writings," six are historical, supplying additional material in Israel's history. Ruth is an idyl of the age of the Judges, telling a story of sweet friendships and simple goodness. It preserves also a record of David's immediate ancestry, and in thus tracing the origin of the line of Judah's kings adds a very important link in Hebrew history (Ruth 4:17.) Ezra and Nehemiah take up the story where Kings leaves off, and tell of the return of the exiles and the restoration of the temple. Esther preserves a picture of the life among the Jews in Persia in the days of Xerxes [10] and accounts for the origin of the Feast of Purim (Esther 9:26 ff.). 1 and 2 Chronicles largely repeat the story of Samuel and Kings, adding incidents and details connected with the temple worship. Samuel and Kings were written from a prophetic point of view, Chronicles from a priestly. It became apparent to the devout Jew that these historical books should be included in the Canon with the six historical books (Joshua to Kings) that had been previously admitted, in order that the whole story of God's dealings with his chosen people might be told.[11]

[10] Called Ahasuerus in the Old Testament.

[11] Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, do not appear in the Hebrew Bible among the first historical books because they were received into the Canon at a later date. They are arranged in the Christian Bible so as to give historical sequence to the whole history of Israel. This order is of great practical value to the Bible student, but it fails to preserve intact the divisions of the Hebrew Bible in the order of their Canonization. In the Christian Bible Daniel and Lamentations have been placed among the prophets.

The Remaining Books

Concerning the remaining books a word will suffice. Daniel is a book of prophecy, written, it is generally thought by the best scholars, in the years that followed the bloody persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes. In the Christian Bible it appears among the prophets, but in the Hebrew Bible it remains in its old place among "The Writings." Songs of Solomon and Lamentations are short poetic books. The first is a collection of songs presenting in a most beautiful way a woman's faithfulness to her shepherd lover when wooed by the king, and typifying the more wonderful love of God. Lamentations is a lament over Jerusalem, written presumably by Jeremiah.[12]

The Canonization of "The Writings"

It is generally conceded that most of the books in "The Writings" had been completed at the time of the conclusion of the Canon of "The Prophets," about 200 B.C. They were not, however, for various reasons, included in the Hebrew Canon at that time. Some of them were in spirit and content different from the Prophets, such as Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Others had been too recently written, such as Chronicles and Esther. Possibly Daniel and Psalms had not been completed. We have now to consider the circumstances under which "The Writings" were admitted into the Canon.

[12] A few years ago a negro was sentenced to death by the court in Henderson, North Carolina. On being asked if he desired to say anything, he read the third chapter of Lamentations with dramatic effect.

In the year 168 B.C. the Greeks under Antiochus Epiphanes instituted a most drastic policy against the Jews. Palestine was under their dominion and they undertook to destroy with one blow the Hebrew religion, and reduce the Jews to the level of paganism. In order to accomplish this end they set out in particular to destory their sacred literature. The story of this struggle is told in the Apocryphal books 1 and 2 Maccabees. "And when they had rent in pieces the books of the Law which they found, they burnt them with fire," says the Maccabean historian. "And wheresoever was found any with the book of the Testament, or if any consented to the Law, the king's command was, that they should be put to death." (1 Maccabees 1: 56, 57.) The determination of the Greeks to destroy the sacred books of the Jews deepened their veneration for them. "The persecution of Antiochus only succeeded in revealing to the possessors of Scripture the priceless character of their heritage," and gave decided impetus to the Canonization of "The Writings." Shortly after "The Prophets" were received into the Hebrew Bible certain books, not yet accepted as part of the Hebrew Canon, were added as an informal appendix. This, it appears, was the beginning of the acceptance of "The Writings" as accredited Scripture. We have observed in an earlier chapter how God completed the Canon of the Law through the suffering of the Babylonian exiles. In like manner the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes contributed to the canonization of "The Writings."

The date of the reception of "The Writings" into the Hebrew Bible cannot accurately be determined. Certain facts put together, however, enable us to arrive at an ap-

proximate date. The earliest reference we have to a third division in the Hebrew Canon is in the prologue to Ecclesiasticus, a book of the Apocrypha.[13] Ecclesiasticus was written about 190 B.C. by one Jesus, the son of Sirach. The prologue was written in 132 B.C. by the grandson of the author of Ecclesiasticus. He says that his grandfather had given himself to "the reading of the law, and the prophets, and the *other books of our fathers.*" We gather from this that during the lifetime of the author of Ecclesiasticus a third division of the Hebrew Canon was in the process of formation, and that as late as 132 B.C., when the prologue was written by his grandson, it had not been definitely received into the Canon.

It appears that "The Writings" were canonized shortly after 132 B.C. Josephus, the great historian of the Jews, writing about 100 A.D., speaks at length of the Hebrew Canon, fixed considerably before his day. The number of books referred to by him as included in the Canon corresponds precisely with the number of books in the Old Testament. Other considerations help us to a more definite date. The New Testament appeals to the "Scriptures" as a fixed body of Sacred literature "in which any alterations would be most improbable."[14] The whole weight of the New Testament goes to prove that the He-

[13] Reference is made three times in the prologue to the three divisions. The third division is not referred to, however, as a recognized portion of the Canon. The reader is referred to the Apocrypha for this most interesting document.

[14] The New Testament quotes from all the books of the Old Testament except Obadiah, Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes.

brew Canon had been completed before the coming of Christ. During the first century before the advent of our Lord the hostility between the Pharisees and the Sadducees assumed most violent proportions. It would hardly have been possible for any book to have been received into the Canon during this period that would have been acceptable to both factions. This pushes the canonization of the last division of the Hebrew Bible back at least a century before Christ. When all available facts are set in relation to one another it appears that "The Writings" were admitted into the Canon shortly before 100 B.C., and accepted as Scripture along with "The Law and the Prophets."

This marked the canonization of the last portion of the Old Testament. About one hundred years before the advent of him of whom the Scriptures testified and who in his Person and ministry fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, God finished through the Hebrew people the Scriptures of the Old Covenant and by so much prepared the way for the New.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. In what particulars did Hebrew literary customs differ from our own? Does the question of authorship invalidate the integrity of the Scriptures?

2. How did the Exile give impetus to the literary activity of the Jews? Is all the religious literature produced by them included in the Old Testament?

3. Name the books of "The Writings." What does the title indicate as to the general character of the books of this division?

4. What are the Psalms? Describe their distinct religious value.

5. How did David's name come to be associated with the Psalter? Describe the growth of the Psalter.

6. Compare the "wise men" of Israel with the prophets.

7. What books are included in the Wisdom Literature? Characterize each.

8. Name the historical books found among the Writings. What contribution does each make to the history of Israel? Why do they not appear in the Hebrew Bible with the other historical books? Why is their position changed in the Christian Bible?

9. Characterize Daniel, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations.

10. How did the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes contribute to the formation of the Hebrew Canon? What was the first step in the acceptance of the Writings as Scripture?

11. What is the approximate date of the admission of the Writings into the Canon? Review the facts that lead us to this conclusion.

"But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them, and found them worthy for himself."

WISDOM OF SOLOMON (Apocrypha) 3:1-5.

"The love of the Lord passeth all things for illumination: he that holdeth it, whereto shall he be likened?"

ECCLESIASTICUS (Apocrypha) 25:11.

"Do not bind the counsels of the Lord our God: for God is not as man that he may be threatened; neither is he as the son of man that he should be wavering. Therefore let us wait for salvation of him, and call upon him to help us, and he will hear our voice if it please him."

JUDITH (Apocrypha) 8:16-17.

"From Genesis to Revelation we feel that this book, the Bible, is in a real sense a unity. It is not a collection of fragments, but has, as we say, an organic character. It has one connected story from beginning to end; we see something growing before our eyes; . . . when the whole is finished we feel that here again, as in the primal creation, God has finished all his works, and, behold, they are very good."

JAMES ORR.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMPLETED OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew Canon Formally Ratified

Though the limits of the Hebrew Canon were determined about 100 B.C., when the books of the Writings were received as Scripture, a considerable dispute continued among the rabbis concerning the Canon for about two centuries. Certain books already included in the Canon were viewed with suspicion, notably Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, and in many quarters it was denied that they merited a place in the Scriptures. The Song of Solomon is a glorification of human love, and "Jewish scholars were perplexed by the difficulty of discovering a suitable interpretation of this seemingly secular theme." The teachings of Ecclesiastes did not appear to agree with the high principles of the Law and the Prophets. In the book of Esther the name of God does not occur. In this it differs most radically from the other historical books of the Canon, in which God is the central figure. The absence of any reference to Deity moved many Jewish doctors to deny that Esther merited a place in the Scriptures. Let it be observed, however, that the controversy concerning the disputed books from 100 B.C. to 100 A.D. was not on the question whether or not they should be admitted into the Canon, but rather whether or not they should *remain* there. Throughout the discussion it was implied that they were generally

received as Scripture, thus confirming our conclusion that the Writings were canonized not later than 100 B.C.

A situation had arisen that rendered it necessary to define the limits of the Hebrew Canon. The Jews were no longer a people of Palestine, but were scattered through all the provinces of the Greek and Roman world.[1] In mixing with the nations large numbers of them no longer spoke their mother tongue, but Greek, the universal language of that age. Alexandria, Egypt, in particular, became a great Jewish center, and was distinguished throughout the Greek world as a seat of learning. Here, sometime before the beginning of the Christian era, the Old Testament was translated into Greek for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews, and this translation had a very wide circulation.[2] Thrown into daily contact with other peoples; no longer reading their Scriptures in their mother-tongue; separated from Jerusalem, the stronghold of orthodoxy, the Jews of the Dispersion became much more liberally minded than the Jews of Palestine. One of the perils of liberal-mindedness is loss of conviction. This peril in some measure overtook the Jews of the Dispersion. They lost to a considerable degree the strict

[1] See Acts 2:9-11, illustrating how the Jews gathered from all quarters for the Feasts at Jerusalem. They were called the Jews of the Dispersion.

[2] Called Septuagint, from the Greek word for seventy, because the translation of the Law was presumably made by seventy scholars. Paul in his epistles usually quotes from the Septuagint rather than from the original Hebrew version and that in part accounts for the fact that his quotations from the Old Testament are not always in exact verbal agreement with the words of the one whom he quotes.

ideas that had distinguished the Jewish race as the people of God. Their ideas of the Canon became somewhat loose, and because certain religious books appealed to them they were included in their Bible. With all of our liberal-mindedness no one has suggested among us that "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" be included in the Psalms, or that *Pilgrim's Progress* be added to the New Testament. But among the Jews of the Dispersion, the books which now make up the Apocrypha were one by one added to their Bible. It is extremely doubtful if these books were ever accepted by them as Scripture in the sense that they accepted the Law and the Prophets. But that they were included among their sacred books there can be no doubt. "So the Apocrypha got into the Greek 'Bible of the Dispersion,' but never into the Hebrew Bible. It was accepted in Alexandria, but never in Palestine. There it, and the Bible which contained it, were regarded as 'an abomination worse than the worship of the golden calf.'" [3] These two versions of the Hebrew Bible—the liberal Bible of the Dispersion and the orthodox Bible of Palestine—caused great confusion, and left the limits of the Canon very indefinitely defined.

In 70 A.D. another catastrophe befell the Jews. Jerusalem was again destroyed, this time by the Romans under Titus. The stronghold of the orthodox party which had contended for the purity of the Hebrew Canon was uprooted. In order to preserve their Bible intact for succeeding generations, it was imperative that all questions concerning it be cleared up and that the limits of the Canon be definitely defined. In 90 A.D. a council of Jewish

[3] *The Bible in the Making,* Smyth, p. 153.

Rabbis was convened at Jamnia, near Jaffa. Concerning the details of this council we know little. "Rabbi Gamaliel II seems to have presided. . . . It was decided that the difficulties which had been felt about the book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon could be fairly answered" (Ryle). It seems that at the Council of Jamnia the official seal of Jewish authorities was put on the Hebrew Canon and its limits were finally determined. From that time there has been no probability of any alteration in the contents of the Old Testament. The Scriptures as accepted in Palestine became the universal Bible of the Hebrew people.

Let no one suppose, however, that the Old Testament is a product of the council of Jamnia or any other council. It is not a man-made book. We have reviewed how God wrought it out of the experience of Israel through the buffetings of many centuries, and have discovered how its bounds had been recognized for two centuries before the council of Jamnia. The council only gave official sanction to what had been previously accepted by general usage as the Word of God.

The Apocrypha

In the course of these studies frequent mention has been made of the Old Testament Apocrypha. Who does not remember how in the old family Bible the books of the Apocrypha fell between the Old Testament and the New, oftentimes illustrated by mysterious pictures? One who has not in childhood stolen away for a while and in a dimly-lighted, old-fashioned parlor pored over these

strange books has missed much. The Apocrypha is still to be found in most pulpit Bibles. It is fitting that a word should be said about these books that are on the borderland of Scripture.[4]

The books of the Apocrypha are a part of the religious literature of the Jews not admitted into the Canon of Scripture. It has been already noted that these books were held in high favor among the Jews, and especially those of the Dispersion. It appears that some attempt was made to add Ecclesiasticus and 1 Maccabees to the Canon.

The Christians inherited the Old Testament from the Jews. Since the early Christians for the most part did not live in Palestine, but were scattered among all peoples, and since they did not speak Hebrew but Greek, they were familiar with the Greek translation of the Old Testament to which the books of the Apocrypha had been appended. Being mostly ignorant of Hebrew traditions and not imbued with Hebrew sentiments, the distinction between the Hebrew Canon and the Apocrypha was from the first almost obliterated in their minds. Books of the Apocrypha were sometimes publicly read in the Churches, and appealed to as possessing the authority of Scripture. The great fathers of the early Church were, however, mindful of the distinction between the Canon and the Apocrypha.

[4] The Apocrypha is composed of thirteen books: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther (additional chapters), Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Three Holy Children (an additional to Daniel), Prayer of Manasses, 1 and 2 Maccabees.

Only through the weight of their learning was the tradition of the true Hebrew Canon preserved.

In the latter part of the Fourth Century A.D. the Pope appointed Jerome, one of the most learned and godly of the Church fathers, to translate the Bible into Latin.[5] Jerome was versed in Church history, and fully aware of the limits of the Hebrew Canon. He made his Old Testament translation from the original Hebrew Bible, refusing to recognize the Apocrypha as Scripture. This raised a storm of protest from the general public, by whom the Apocrypha was held in high veneration. But Jerome was a scholar and a fighter, and held his ground. After his translation of the Bible was completed, he yielded to repeated appeals and protests, and translated two books of the Apocrypha (Tobit and Judith), and added them to the Bible. When he was in his grave and could no longer speak, popular demand gained its point. The other books of the Apocrypha were translated and the whole was received by the Roman Catholic Church into the Old Testament Canon. The Apocrypha is accepted to this day by the Roman Church as Scripture on a par with the canonical books of the Old Testament.

Among Christians the question of the Canon remained in abeyance until the time of the Reformation. One of the basic principles on which Luther launched his great movement was that the Bible, and not the decrees of the Church, was the seat of authority in religion. It was therefore necessary to define what was Scripture. Luther was

[5] His version is called the Vulgate, and is still the official version of the Roman Church, read in her services in all lands in the Latin tongue.

acquainted with the limits of the Old Testament Canon as recognized by the Hebrews of Palestine and by our Lord and the Apostles.[6] He very properly refused to recognize the Apocrypha as Scripture, and expunged the books included in it from the Old Testament. In this he has been followed by all Protestant Churches. Protestant versions of the Bible admit no books into the Old Testament not found in the Hebrew Canon. The Church of England, and following her the Protestant Episcopal Church, treat the Apocrypha as profitable for study, but not authoritative in questions of faith and doctrine. The lesson for All Saints' Day is taken from the Wisdom of Solomon.[7]

Looking Backward

We have traced the growth of the Old Testament Canon from the beginnings to its completion and ratification. An honest effort has been made to answer the three questions set before us in the first chapter.[8] Our studies have sometimes led us into rather tedious paths. But as we look backward over the way we have come we are moved to exclaim with Paul: "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out! For who hath known the mind of God? or who hath been his counsellor?" He has used the little things of earth

[6] No book of the Apocrypha is quoted in the New Testament. Jude alone quotes from a non-canonical book (Enoch), which book is not included in the Apocrypha. (See Jude 14.)

[7] Chapter iii. 1-5. See p. 92.

[8] See p. 19.

to confound the wise, and has made the wrath of man to praise him. God did not deliver the word of the Old Testament to a few souls who mechanically wrote what he dictated, and who, without injecting any of their heart experience into it, transmitted the message to us. This seems sometimes to be the popular idea of inspiration. The word of God is not so easily delivered or received. The inspired men of the Old Testament are something more than superhuman stenographers. Rather let us say that through the travail of a peculiar people God revealed to them his heart as they were able to understand. Led by the Spirit, they wrote, they revised, they collected, they edited, they separated, and at last there emerged the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is God's message to us through the Hebrews. It tells us what he taught them concerning himself and human life. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The Jehovah of Israel is the Lord of the earth.

How much grander is the Old Testament for having emerged out of the long discipline of a chosen people! How much more precious for the hard and intricate way along which it came to us! Two concluding considerations should confirm our faith in the Old Testament as the word of God.

The Old Testament Was the Bible of Jesus

When Jesus lived and died there was no Bible save the Old Testament. The books of which we have been studying were the Scriptures of his boyhood and ministry. He loved them and constantly appealed to them. A

saying of his preserved in the Gospel of Matthew appears to indicate that he recognized as Scripture the exact books that are in our Old Testament. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth," he said, *"from the blood of the righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias."* (Matt. 23:35.) He was evidently referring to the course of Israel's history as recorded in the Hebrew Canon. The story of Abel is told in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament Canon, and the story of Zacharias is told in 2 Chronicles, the last book according to the Hebrew arrangement. This expression he seems to have used to include the whole Old Testament, just as we commonly say, referring to the completed Bible, "from Genesis to Revelation."

But more important is the divine sanction which Jesus puts on the message of the Old Testament. "He took for granted its fundamental doctrines about creation, about man, and about righteousness; about God's providence for the world, and about his purpose of grace for Israel. He accepted its history as the preparation for himself, and taught his disciples to find him in it. He used it to justify his mission and to illuminate the mystery of the cross. He drew from it many of the examples and most of the categories of the gospel. He reënforced the essence of its law and restored many of its ideals. But above all, he fed his own soul on its contents, and in the great crisis of his life sustained himself upon it as upon the living and sovereign word of God. These are the highest external proofs—if indeed we can call them external—for the abiding validity of the Old Testament in the life and doctrine of Christ's Church. What was indispensable to

the Redeemer must always be indispensable to the redeemed." [9]

The Old Testament Bears the Unmistakable Imprint of the Holy Spirit

"I know that this book is divine because it finds me," said Coleridge after he had read the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The things of the spirit are always surcharged with an indefinable power. He is dull of heart indeed who does not discover the fire of the Spirit fairly sparkling on Old Testament pages. Sometimes it flares up with rare brilliancy, as in the twenty-third Psalm and in Isaiah 53. Everywhere the devout soul feels it. The stories of Israel's ancient heroes arrest us, and explore for us our own hearts. The songs of her singers and the seraphic messages of her prophets stir our souls to believe in God. The Old Testament disciplines, strengthens, assures the heart. There is no other literature like the Bible. Between it and the best books of the Apocrypha the careful reader will see a great gulf fixed. In its manifold variety there is a consistent unity, and in its message there is perennial freshness. It is remarkable in what it leaves out and still more wonderful in what it contains. This indefinable element is the Spirit of God. The voice of the Scripture is the best testimony to its divinity.

The Holy Spirit dealt with the Hebrew people as He deals with us individually. Patiently he led them through the first faith, the nation's childhood, through the disci-

[9] *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, George Adam Smith, p. 11.

pline of youth and the severe trials of maturity, in all their experiences revealing to them the manifold grace of God. He used, as we have seen, the ordinary events of history as instruments to purify and shape the Hebrew Canon. As the mature Christian is a monument to divine patience, so also is the Old Testament.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. State clearly the three conditions which arose among the Jews that made it necessary to define definitely the limits of the Old Testament Canon.

2. What books in the Old Testament Canon were in particular attacked by Jewish doctors as not deserving a place in the Scriptures? On what grounds? Do you think the Old Testament would have been impoverished if they had been left out? Give your reasons for your answer.

3. Explain how the Apocrypha got into the Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews? Were these books ever recognized by the Jews of Palestine?

4. When was Jerusalem destroyed by Titus? When had it been previously destroyed and by whom?

5. Tell what you can of the Council of Jamnia.

6. What is the Apocrypha? Explain how it got into the Bible of the early Christians? How did it get into the Roman Catholic Bible? How was it expunged from the Protestant Bible?

7. What three questions were set before us at the beginning of our studies in the history of the Canon?

8. Does the long process of the growth of the Hebrew Canon traced in these chapters enhance for you the spiritual value of the Old Testament? Explain your answer.

9. What two concluding considerations confirm our faith in the Old Testament as the Word of God?

THE NEW TESTAMENT

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it."

ROBERT BROWNING.

"When Jesus lay in his mother's arms, the rich world, with its burden of sickness and slavery, was as restless as a hungry child. Down the sunset of that era slanted three rays of declining glory, of which the first was Greece, with her arts; the second Rome, with her laws; and the third Israel, with her religion: while the gloom of selfishness, creeping slowly over the landscape, threw hideous shadows of grosser evils. Then arose the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings, and blended again these diverse colors, and so shone forth as the Day-Light of the world, by which we may now walk in safety."

P. WHITWELL WILSON.

"More and more the wild, sad, frightened cries of men who believe nothing, and the calm, earnest, patient prayers of men who believe so much that they long for perfect faith, seem to blend into the great appeal which Philip of Bethsaida made to Jesus at that Last Supper, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' And more and more the answer to that appeal seems to come from the same blessed lips that answered Philip, the lips of the Mediator Jesus, who replies, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet thou hast not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'"

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S REVELATION

The Old Testament and the New

The Old Testament, as we have observed, grew out of the soil of the Jewish Church, and is a record of God's long preparation among the Jews for the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament, on the other hand, grew out of the Christian Church of the First Century and is a record and interpretation of the Christ for whom the ages had waited. It will help us in our approach to the New Testament to note the general significance of the two major divisions of the Bible, and their relation to each other.

In our English tongue the word "Testament" literally means one's last will and testament "by which a person declares his will as to the disposal of his estate and effects." (Webster.) It is not an accurate translation of the word which was used at the first to designate the two major divisions of the Bible.[1] The Greek word which in this connection is rendered "testament" really means, as employed in the Bible, an understanding, a binding agreement, a covenant. The original meaning of the two

[1] Tertullian, one of the old Church fathers, mistook the biblical sense of the Greek word "diatheke" (covenant) and, translating it into Latin, rendered it *testamentum* (last will and testament). From Tertullian's erroneous Latin translation we get "testament." (*Text and Canon of the New Testament,* Souter, pp. 156, 157.) Compare how "Biblia" (books) came to be "Bible" (book), Chapter I.

major divisions of the Bible would be more accurately expressed were they called the *Old Covenant* and the *New Covenant*. The God of the old had an understanding with Abraham (Gen. 17) and with Moses (Ex. 24:7, 8) and through them with all Israel, and this understanding was known among Greek-speaking people as a covenant. A new era in the religious life of mankind begins with Christ. Through him there was a new understanding between God and man, and it was accordingly called the New Covenant. John most excellently summarizes the content of the two covenants: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) We, upon whom the riches of the ages have come, are inheritors of the Old and the New, heirs indeed of the manifold grace of God.

The author of Hebrews, writing less than half a century after the death of Jesus, states very clearly the *relation* of the Old Testament to the New: "God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in his Son." Our studies in the history of the Old Testament Canon have demonstrated the statement made in the first chapter, that the Bible is a progressive revelation of God. "By divers portions and in divers manners," in the Law and the Prophets and the Writings, God unfolded his mind and purpose among his people Israel. We are now prepared to observe how he brought the whole to a magnificent consummation in the gift of his Son. The Old Testament gave promise of the New; the New fulfills the Old. The Old lays the foundation of the Law; the New proclaims the gift

of grace. Sir Walter Scott in *The Fair Maid of Perth* tells of a Scottish guide in the Wicks of Baiglie who, on reaching a bold, protruding rock from which could be had a commanding view of the valley beneath, exclaimed to his companions, "Ah, sirs, this is the decisive point." [2] We have arrived at the decisive point in our studies in God's progressive revelation. Standing on the pinnacle of his revelation in Jesus Christ, we are able to view the far sweep of his purposes in Israel, and we discover that every path winds upward to Israel's Messiah.

Christ the Central Figure of the Bible

In this volume we have been considering the Bible primarily as a library of sacred literature. And yet amid all its variety there runs a unifying element that binds the whole together and stamps it as the Book of God. What is that element which unites sixty-six books into a Canon of Scripture? On what ultimate ground, let us ask, does each book claim a place in the Christian Bible?

A book is not entitled to a place in the Canon of Scripture solely because it contains some truth concerning God. The Almighty has, in a measure, revealed himself in innumerable places outside the Bible. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." All nature bears the fingerprints of the Creator and every discovery of science is but another revelation of God's method in his physical universe. Pagan faiths have in them some elements of truth. The hymns of the Hindoos, written centuries before Christ, sometimes por-

[2] Cited by Moffatt in *Introduction to the New Testament.*

tray elevated thoughts concerning the Almighty, as in these lines:

> "He marks the good and ill within
> The breath of men; the false and true
> Discerns with never-erring view:
> He hates deceit, chastises sin.
>
> Absolve us from the guilt, we pray,
> Of all the sin our fathers wrought
> And sins which we commit in thought
> And speech and act, from day to day."[3]

Neither can any book claim a place in Scripture because it stirs one's heart to noble thoughts and purposes or kindles in his breast a desire for God. All great literature in some measure has this effect upon the soul. John Bunyan records in his *Grace Abounding* that in his season of spiritual darkness he found enlightenment in a verse from the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus.[4] Augustine says that through reading a certain book of Cicero his affections were altered and his prayers were turned toward God.[5] The Bible indeed contains a more satisfying revelation of God than is found in nature, or in the best of the world's literature, and it is the most effective of all books in turning the heart of man toward God, but we must look beyond these virtues to discover the element that gives peculiar unity to the Scriptures.

The books that form our Bible are entitled to a place in the Canon because of their relation to Jesus Christ.

[3] *The Religions of India,* Menzies, p. 19.

[4] "Look at the generations of old and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?" (Ecclus. 2: 10.)

[5] *Confessions of Augustine,* p. 36.

The historical books of the Old Testament tell the story of the chosen line from which the Saviour of men came. Every period in that story is of intrinsic value because it is a link in the chain of God's historical revelation. The law was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. (Gal. 3:24.) The messages of the prophets and the wise men foreshadow the coming of Christ by enunciating principles which he alone could fulfill and by stirring aspirations which he alone could satisfy. As in the Old Testament Christ is foreshadowed, so in the books of the New Testament Christ is exhibited and interpreted. The apostles quote freely from the Old Testament to show how vitally it was connected in every way with Christ.[6] Through Christ they saw the Old Testament in a new light and discovered the brightness of his glory on every page. The Bible is a distinctive book, not primarily because of its excellence, but fundamentally because of the relation of every part to Jesus, who is the consummation of God's revelation.

Christ, then, is the unifying element in the Scriptures, binding all the parts into a consistent whole. He is, as Augustine said, *latent* (hidden) in the Old Testament and *patent* (manifest) in the New. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

> "Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning;
> Christ, the beginning, for the end is Christ."

One may say that if Ruth and Esther were left out of the Old Testament nothing essential would be lost. He might

[6] Note particularly the addresses of Peter, Stephen, and Paul in the Acts.

as well say that if a man should lose his finger he would be deprived of nothing essential. He would still be a man, and able to work, but he would not be a whole man. Ruth is a beautiful link in the chain, connecting the days of the Judges with the days of the Kings and preserving the family history of the Messianic line. Esther pictures the condition of the Chosen People in Persia, and without it something would be lost concerning God's increasing purpose in Israel. We are unwilling to dispense with either of them, because they stand in vital relation to Israel and Israel's Christ.

In The Fullness of Time

The history of the New Testament Canon is much simpler than the history of the Old Testament Canon. The Old Testament was in the making for a period of more than two thousand years; and in tracing its history, one is, in the nature of the case, beset with many and sometimes insuperable difficulties. Most of the books of the New Testament were written within fifty years after the Resurrection of Jesus, and all of them, with the possible exception of 2 Peter, were, in the opinion of the author, written before the close of the First Century.

In the fullness of time, after God's long preparation was ended, Jesus was born of Mary. The condition of the world at the time of his coming convinces us that the event had been set by the wise Providence that guides the course of human history. Not only through the Hebrew line had the great preparation been made, but also among the nations which knew not God. Among the

Greeks had been developed a language remarkable for its flexibility and exactness of expression. Greek was the "universal tongue" of the day, and a ready vehicle to give expression to Gospel truth. In this rich language our New Testament was written. The Romans had built a great empire around the Mediterranean. The fact that so large a territory was unified under one government and connected by well-built roads made it possible for the Gospel to spread to every part of the Empire before the first century was ended. God used Cæsar's military map to spread the reign of the Prince of Peace, and again made the wrath of man to praise him. Moreover it was an age of religious confusion. The Greeks and Romans had lost faith in their religious systems. Judaism had degenerated into formal, soulless legalism. Religiously the world was adrift. The new faith that spoke with authority concerning God found a field ripe unto the harvest. When the Holy Child lay on Mary's breast all things were propitious for the new era that God was inaugurating for mankind.

The teachings and works of Jesus won for him a large following, mostly from the simple folk of Galilee. His ministry on the other hand aroused the bitter opposition of the ruling class of the Jews. It is hard to determine which is more perilous to a great cause, the applause of a fickle public opinion or the opposition of blind prejudice. In order to insure the purity of his message, Jesus spent a large portion of the latter half of his ministry in retirement with twelve men whom he had chosen to be his intimate companions. His teachings as preserved by them admit of no other interpretation than that he taught them

that he was the long-expected Messiah and the divine Son of God. He breathed into them his spirit. He trained them in apostleship in order that through them and their successors in the Christian ministry his Gospel might be proclaimed in all the world.

When in the midst of his career Jesus was crucified by his enemies the hopes of his disciples were shattered. Three days later they found his empty tomb. They were bewildered. He appeared to them and others no less than ten times: he conversed with them in his risen body: he commissioned them to preach the Gospel to all the world, and ascended to his Father. They remained in Jerusalem, as he had commanded them, and on the day of Pentecost they were endued with the power of the Holy Spirit. It was an epoch-making experience. They had never before understood the mystery of Christ. From that place (possibly the upper room in Mary's house where the Last Supper had been eaten), they went to proclaim that God had in Christ reconciled the world to himself. Let it be noted that there were three major points in their faith and preaching from the first—a human-divine Christ, a sacrificial cross, and an empty tomb.

Early Preaching of the Apostles

The New Testament plainly tells us that the preaching of the Gospel preceded the writing of the Gospels. The first passion of the apostles was not literary, but evangelistic. They did not hasten from Pentecost to write a life of Jesus, but to preach. The book of Acts, which is the early history of the Church, records that with hearts

aglow they went about preaching Jesus [7]—that is, telling what Jesus said and did while they companied with him and how he died and rose again. The first preachers of the New Covenant were called witnesses, because, having known Jesus in the flesh, they bore personal testimony to the fact of the Incarnation.[8]

The burden of the first apostolic preaching was, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." (See 1 John 1:1-4.) Imagine the thrill that would be experienced by a congregation of believers when one who had been with Jesus in the flesh would visit them and tell them the story of the Galilean Carpenter—how he with divine compassion ministered to the unfortunate, how he taught, how he lived, how he died and rose again. The living voice, then as now, was more potent than the written word. In those bridal days of the Church, while eyewitnesses to the glory of Jesus were still among them, they did not feel the need of a written Gospel. Furthermore the Church was expecting the early return of Jesus to establish his spiritual kingdom on the earth, and in view of that expectation the apostles did not feel the necessity of writing a full and authentic story of the life of Jesus.

As the years went by it became increasingly evident that Jesus had commissioned the Church to a long conquest.

[7] Acts 5:42; 8:5, 35, etc.

[8] Paul had not known Jesus in the flesh, but even he claims a right to be numbered among the apostles on the ground that he had seen the Lord in a vision on the Damascus Road. (See 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8.) In the most effective of his recorded public utterances he related how he saw Jesus, and what Jesus said to him. (See Acts 26.)

The expectation of the immediate return of Jesus, so prominent in the beginning, gradually recedes into the background. In a few years the Church had spread through Samaria and Galatia and as far west as Rome. It was impossible for the few men who had been eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus to cover so extensive a territory telling what they had seen and heard of Jesus. An authoritative record became a necessity in the work of the Church. Moreover with the passing of the years the men and women who had been eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus were one by one slipping from the earth. Who would tell the story so dear to human hearts after the last of those who knew Jesus in the flesh had gone?[9] Out of the apostolic group, men to whom Jesus was a holy memory and an ever-present joy, sprang the four Gospels. The origin of these records of the life of Christ, which are the very heart of the Bible, will be the subject of our studies in the next chapter.

[9] Robert Browning in "A Death in the Desert" portrays most vividly the supposed feeling of the Apostle John as he was dying. Being the last of those who had known Jesus in the flesh, he wonders what will be the result when there are no more eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus, and says

> "it is long
> Since James and Peter had release by death,
> And I am only he, your brother John,
> Who saw and heard, and could remember all."

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. What does the Greek word which in our English is translated "testament" really mean as employed in the Scriptures? In the light of your answer explain the significance of the Old Testament and the New.

2. How does the author of Hebrews state the relation of the Old Testament to the New? Do you think that he teaches that the Bible is a progressive revelation? Explain your answer.

3. On what ultimate ground is each of the books of the Bible entitled to a place in this collection? Why do not other excellencies entitle them to a place there? Develop your answer in detail.

4. Show how God prepared the way outside Judaism for the coming of Christ.

5. Why did Christ retire from the multitudes to instruct twelve men?

6. What were the three major points in the apostle's faith and preaching?

7. What was the nature of the first preaching of the apostles? Cite instances in the New Testament to justify your answer.

8. Why did not the Church at first feel the necessity of a written account of the life of Jesus? What conditions made necessary an authentic record of his life?

"The freest inquiry is the only possible path to sound conviction."

MARCUS DODS.

"The danger of criticism is not in what it discovers, but in turning the mind aside to details and externals. Those who work in it tend to lose perspective and atmosphere."

MARCUS DODS.

"Faith begins with the willingness to venture on Christ's bare word. Consent with the will and you will be able to assent with the mind. . . . The man who is willing to act as if historic Christianity were true will be able eventually to appeal to the facts of his life against whatsoever objections of a speculative kind that may be urged against it because the disposition to obey Christ always enlarges the experience that faith begins."

HARRIS E. KIRK.

"The apostolic Gospel consisted fundamentally of the joyful proclamation: 'The Lord has risen and hath appeared.' Apart from this underlying conviction early Christianity has no explanation, has not even any existence. New Testament religion is grounded on the life of a Risen Lord, not founded on the teachings of a departed and deluded religious devotee."

THOMAS CARTER

CHAPTER IX

THE FOUR GOSPELS

The Early Records of the Life of Jesus

In the introduction to his Gospel Luke makes a statement that arrests our attention. "Forasmuch," he says, "as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us. . . . . it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus." (Luke 1:1-4.) This rather incidental statement gives us some very interesting and enlightening information concerning the early records of the life of Jesus. Prior to the writing of the third Gospel many accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus had been committed to writing. These early memoirs were authoritative, Luke assures us, for they rested on the testimony of eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus. They were, we may assume, prepared to instruct converts in the Gospel story, in the absence of the apostles. A large number of them were no doubt fragmentary—collections of miscellaneous sayings, or of one or more parables, or miracles or striking incidents in the life of Jesus. The fragmentary nature of these early narratives appears to have moved Luke to arrange the many parts in proper sequence, and write the whole "in order" for his friend Theophilus.

With the exception of a few fragments here and there, we have no record of the life of Jesus save what has come

down to us in our Canonical Gospels. We are expressly told by the Apostle John that many things which Jesus said and did were not preserved in the Gospel record. (John 21:25.) It appears that Paul had in his possession one of these early sources, for he quotes a saying of Jesus not found in either of our four Gospels. (Acts 20:35.) Quite recently Doctor David Smith has assembled from ancient manuscripts and other sources eight fragmentary sayings attributed to Jesus, all of them more or less authentic and none of them found in either of the Gospels.[1] Especially interesting is the inscription found by Doctor Alexander Duff on a Mohammedan mosque in India and cited by Doctor Smith: "Jesus, on whom be peace, said, 'The world is merely a bridge: ye are to pass over it and not to build your dwellings on it.'" If we are to accept the tradition that Thomas, one of the twelve, went as a missionary to India, it may be that we have in these words a true saying of our Lord, preserved by the melancholy Thomas. It is quite likely that these sayings of Jesus, not found in the Canonical Gospels, are remnants of the many narratives referred to by Luke.[2]

So many narratives would tend to confuse the public

[1] *The Unwritten Sayings of Our Lord,* Smith.

[2] We have every reason to believe, however, that most of the material contained in the narratives referred to by Luke is preserved in our four Gospels, since the evangelists would be careful to omit no essential facts in the story of Jesus. There are not a few compilations of the unwritten sayings and deeds of Jesus. Notable among them is the collection in *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels,* Westcott, Appendix C. They are interesting, but compared with what is preserved in the Gospels they are of no great importance.

mind. It was supremely necessary that the Church should have an authentic and orderly account of the earthly career of the Messiah. The men who had preached Christ were led by the Spirit who had inspired their preaching to write the story of Christ. About thirty or forty years after the resurrection the Gospel of Mark appeared, and after it Matthew, Luke, and John.

The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke

The first three Gospels are commonly called the Synoptics, because they "agree in giving one *synopsis* or general view of the same series of events." Each writer tells the story from a different point of view, and there are therefore many variations. One omits what another includes; one enlarges on what another merely mentions, and each has his own peculiar words and phrases. There is, however, among the three a similarity in material and expression which is apparent to every reader. The three accounts of the call of Matthew, for instance, will serve to illustrate the differences and the striking similarities in the Synoptics:

Matthew 9:9, 10	Mark 2:13-15	Luke 5:27-29
And as Jesus passed by from thence he saw a man called Matthew, sitting at the table of toll: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass as he sat at meat in his house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.	And he went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the place of toll, and he said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, that he was sitting at meat at his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.	And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said unto him, Follow me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house: and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them.[8]

It is evident from the above, which is but a sample of threefold narrative selected at random, that the three evangelists are either indebted to one another or that they secured their material from documents accessible to all of them. Such similarity in content and wording cannot be accidental. To discover the sources from which Matthew, Mark, and Luke drew their material would throw much light on the origin of the Gospels, and by so much establish their claim to a place in the Scriptures. It behooves one to speak of the relation of the Synoptics to each other with all caution and with becoming modesty,

[8] From Stevens and Burton's *Harmony of the Gospels.*

for it is a matter that has not been finally disposed of by Biblical scholars. The explanation which follows appears to the writer to be in accordance with the evidence at hand and to account most satisfactorily for the differences and similarities among the first three Gospels.

The Testimony of Papias

The writer has frequently been asked by inquiring souls if there is any early testimony to the truthfulness of the New Testament outside the New Testament itself. Our materials are scant, but by no means altogether lacking, and those which we possess strongly confirm the claims of the New Testament.

Among the earliest of these extra-canonical witnesses was Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis. He was born about 70 A.D., forty years after the resurrection of Jesus, and lived to the middle of the second century. In his younger days he may have been personally acquainted with the Apostle John and other of the primitive disciples. Concerning this we cannot speak with certainty. We do know, however, that he was a friend of Polycarp and that Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John.[4] Papias was therefore in close touch with the apostles, and in position to receive trustworthy information. Now this Papias tells us that he was careful to interview all whom he met who had personally known the disciples of Jesus, inquiring

[4] This is the Polycarp who was Bishop of Smyrna. When in extreme age he was on the day of his martyrdom offered his freedom if he would renounce Christ, he replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, nor has he ever done me any harm. How, then, could I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

of them what they had heard the disciples say. These recollections of the apostles he collected in a book called "Explanation of the Lord's Discourses." Unfortunately this book has been lost. It was in existence in the Thirteenth Century, but no copies of it are known to have been extant after that time. Perhaps it will yet be discovered in some old tomb or monastery. Certain fragments of it have been preserved, however, chiefly in the writings of Irenæus and Eusebius. Two statements of Papias have particular bearing on the origin of the Gospels. He says, "Matthew composed the *Logia* [the words or oracles of Jesus] in Hebrew and each interpreted them as he was able." He further makes a most interesting comment concerning the Gospel of Mark: "And this too the Elder said, Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately all the things that were either said or done by Christ; but, however, not in order. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but subsequently, as I said, attached himself to Peter, who used to frame his teaching to meet the immediate wants of his hearers. . . . So Mark committed no errors in writing down particulars just as he remembered them; for he took heed to one thing, to omit none of the things that he had heard, and to state nothing falsely in his narration of them." The authority of Papias for these statements is none other than the Apostle John.[5] He had

[5] The question has been widely debated whether by "the Elder" Papias meant the Apostle John or some other John otherwise not known to us. The writer is convinced that he meant the Apostle. But even those who maintain that he got his information through some other John will recognize that in that event

heard them either from John directly, or from one who had been personally associated with John.

The Logia of Matthew

What was the *Logia* of Matthew referred to by Papias? It was not the Gospel of Matthew in the form in which we now have it, for Papias takes pains to say that it was written in Hebrew, and we know that our Gospel according to Matthew was written in Greek, and that it is not a translation from a Hebrew original. What we learn from Papias is that Matthew, one of the Twelve, made a collection of the sayings and deeds of Jesus and that this collection was in general circulation in the apostolic Church.

It is not improbable that Matthew's notes on the life and teachings of Jesus were made during the lifetime of the Master. He was in his old occupation a keeper of accounts. Being accustomed to writing, he may have been the secretary of the band of disciples as Judas was the treasurer, making notes on the spot of things worthy of record. It is quite unlikely that the disciples would have trusted to fickle memory the preservation of the remarkable words and no less remarkable deeds of Jesus.[6] Be that as it may, we know that Matthew at an early date collected and wrote down certain notable discourses of

he got it from a very early source. In 2 John verse 1 and 3 John verse 1 the writer refers to himself as "the Elder," and these were recognized at a very early date as written by the Apostle John.

[6] So argues Bruce in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p. 17.

Jesus, and that his work was one of the authoritative sources from which the authors of the Synoptics drew their material. It is no doubt one of the narratives referred to by Luke in the first verse of his Gospel.

The Gospel of Mark

The narrative of the Life of Jesus compiled by Mark and referred to by Papias is, in the opinion of the writer, our Gospel according to Mark. John Mark was a nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), and was a companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.[7] There is an early tradition that the Last Supper was eaten in the house of Mark's mother, and that he was the young man who fled half-naked on the memorable night of the betrayal. (Mark 14:51, 52.) At the time Peter wrote his first epistle Mark was with him. (1 Pet. 5:13.) This fact confirms the statement of Papias that Mark had "subsequently attached himself to Peter."

According to Papias the Gospel of Mark is Peter's reminiscences of Jesus. In his apostolic ministry Peter went about telling the story of his Master, as he had witnessed it with his own eyes, "framing his teaching to meet the immediate needs of his hearers." Mark gathered together the miscellaneous sermons and addresses of Peter, which he received first hand, and cast them into a permanent life of Jesus. It is just such a story as one would expect from Simon Peter, so refreshingly human in all his appreciations and attitudes.[8] The Gospel of Mark tells

[7] See Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:37-39.

[8] Note particularly the account of Peter's denial, Mark 14:66-72. Its vividness, its directness, its unmistakable pathos at least

with wonderful vigor and vividness what Jesus did, reflecting "the style of an impressionable eyewitness." It is "a rough, racy, unvarnished story," as told, we may believe, by the sturdy fisherman of Galilee who had been called from his nets to become a disciple of Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke

The third of our New Testament Gospels was written by Luke, a Gentile physician and a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. He, like Mark, was not one of the original disciples of Jesus. In the introduction to his Gospel, already cited, he tells us that he selected his material with great care from the testimony of those who had been eyewitnesses of the ministry of our Lord. He was an accurate historian and a Spirit-filled man, and his Gospel may be accepted as a trustworthy record of the life of Christ.

Among the many narratives referred to in his introduction, from which Luke obtains the material used in his Gospel, was probably the Gospel of Mark. By comparing the two, one will find that nearly every incident in the life of Jesus told by Mark is retold by Luke. Sometimes Luke abbreviates Mark's account, sometimes he enlarges it, sometimes he substitutes words and phrases of his own; but on the whole there is remarkable verbal similarity. Furthermore, Luke as a rule follows the order of Mark. All of these coincidences would hardly have

suggest that it is Peter's confession. For instance, Matthew and Luke say that Peter "went out and wept bitterly." Mark records, "When he *thought thereon,* he wept."

been possible had not Luke been acquainted with Mark's account of the life of our Lord.

To the story of Jesus as told by Mark, Luke adds many of the sayings of Jesus. From this we conclude that he had before him the *Logia* of Matthew, referred to in a preceding paragraph, and that he turned to it for many of the Lord's discourses recorded by him. The Gospel of Luke includes many things found in neither Mark nor Matthew, notably in the account of our Lord's ministry in Perea. (Luke 9:51 to 19:28.) These portions of his Gospel we assume he drew from the many narratives of which he speaks at the beginning of his Gospel and from the oral testimony of men and women who had known Jesus.[9] With all these sources at hand and under the guidance of the Spirit, Luke wrote, what Ian Maclaren has called, "the most beautiful book in the world."

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew, like that of Luke, reproduces in large measure, with frequent variations, the Gospel of Mark.[10] It is evident that the author of the First Gospel made free use of Mark's account of the life of Jesus. He also had before him the *Logia* (oracles of Jesus), referred to in a preceding paragraph, and into his

[9] There are strong reasons for believing that the Virgin Mary was Luke's informant in his story of Jesus's birth. See *The Virgin Birth of Christ,* Orr, pp. 83-86.

[10] "With the exception of two miracles (Mark 7:31-37, 8:22-26) and one parable (Mark 4:26-29) the whole of Mark has parallels in Matthew or Luke, or both." (*A Critical Introduction of the New Testament,* Peake, p. 102.)

story he wove many of the sayings of our Lord. There were, no doubt, other independent sources at hand, for he incorporates some material found neither in Luke nor Mark. This Gospel was written in apostolic times either by Matthew as an enlargement of his *Logia,* or by one so closely associated with Matthew and drawing his material so largely from him that his name has been inseparably linked with it.

Our space is too limited for us to enter into a discussion of the exact date of the Synoptic Gospels. Suffice it to say in this connection that it is generally agreed that the three were written between the years 60 A.D. and 80 A.D.—written indeed near enough the events which they record, and by men sufficiently endued by the Spirit, to assure us that in them we have an authoritative and trustworthy record of the Saviour of the world.

The Gospel of John

Of the four Gospels, the Gospel of John alone lays specific claim to having been written by a disciple of Jesus and an eyewitness of the things he relates. In the opening paragraph the author declares, "We beheld his glory." (John 1 : 14.) At the end there is an attestation as strong as language can make it: "This is the disciple [that is, the disciple whom Jesus loved, referred to in verse 20] that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true." [11] (John

[11] Some scholars maintain that this is a note added by a later hand. If this verse was not written by John, it was written at a very early date, and carries weight of authority. Westcott sug-

21:24.) The three Synoptics, as we have observed, are compilations of the life of Jesus, consisting of materials collected from authoritative sources. The Gospel of John is the personal reminiscences of the beloved disciple.

It has been said that the mission of the Nineteenth Century was to prove that everybody's work was written by somebody else and that it would be well for the Twentieth Century to betake itself to more profitable inquiries. In recent years it has been denied in some quarters that John wrote the Fourth Gospel. The evidence to the contrary is, however, very strong and assuring. The tone of the book indicates that the writer was an intimate companion of Jesus. Following the example of the authors of the historical books of the Old Testament and exercising a sweetly becoming reserve, he does not mention himself by name.[12] The most ancient authorities accepted the Fourth Gospel as the work of John. Polycarp, a disciple of John, and our old friend Papias, both quote from the First Epistle of John, and one who recognized the Epistle as John's must have accepted the Gospel as from the same hand. Moreover Polycarp had a pupil named Irenæus. Of his association with Polycarp at Smyrna Irenæus writes: "I recall the very place where Polycarp used to sit and teach, his manner of speech, his mode of life, his ap-

gests that it may have been added by the Ephesian elders before its publication, and suggests further that the form of the verb (testifieth, present tense) would indicate that John was still living. See also in this connection John 19:35 and 1 John 1:1-4.

[12] "In the Old Testament the rule is that the historical books (with the exception indeed of Nehemiah) are all anonymous." (*Introduction to the New Testament,* Salmon, p. 213.)

pearance, the style of his addresses to the people, his frequent references to St. John, and to others who had seen our Lord; how he used to repeat from memory their discourses, and the things which he had heard from them concerning our Lord, his miracles and his teachings; and how, being instructed by those who were eyewitnesses of the life of the Word, there was in all that he said a strict agreement with the Scriptures." [13] This same Irenæus, "grandpupil of John" and receiving his information from Polycarp first hand, says, "Afterward" (that is, after Matthew, Mark, and Luke) "John the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned on his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia." If any one was in position to know who wrote the Fourth Gospel, that man was Irenæus. In his works he appeals to the Fourth Gospel as John's, as though its authorship was beyond all question in his day. These and other considerations thoroughly convince the writer that the Gospel dearest to most of our hearts comes to us from the pen of none other than John, the son of Zebedee.

John spent his latter years at Ephesus, where Paul had preached. He was the last of the disciples of Jesus left on earth. Grown old in the faith and being of a medita-

[13] By Scripture he means in this connection the four Gospels. Irenæus wrote about 190 A.D., and it is worthy of note that at so early a date the Gospels were accepted as Scripture. Here is also another testimony to the trustworthiness of the Gospel narrative. Polycarp had heard the Gospel story from John's own lips. Polycarp told Irenæus the things he had learned from the beloved disciple concerning Jesus, and Irenæus says that what he heard from Polycarp was in perfect agreement with what is written in the four Gospels.

tive mind, he lived over again the three wonderful years he had spent with Jesus in Judea and in his native Galilee.

> "I'm growing very old. This weary head
> That hath so often leaned on Jesus' breast
> In days long by that seem almost a dream,
> Is bent and hoary with the weight of years.
> I'm old, so old, I cannot recollect
> The faces that I meet in daily life,
> But that dear Face and every word He spake
> Grow more distinct as others fade away,
> So that I live with Him and the holy dead
> More than the living."[14]

How wonderful must have been the discourses of the aged Apostle concerning all that the Lord Jesus did and said! There was never such preaching in Ephesus, not even when Paul delivered his farewell address to the Ephesian elders. He told many things that had been omitted from the Synoptics. No wonder that his hearers should insist that he commit his discourses to writing in order that after his lips had been closed in death he might still speak to them of the Master on whose breast he had leaned. Clement of Alexandria,[15] who was a contemporary of Irenæus and who spoke on the authority of the elders who knew the facts, tells us how the Gospel of John came to be written: "St. John, last of the evangelists, when he saw that the outward facts had been set forth in the existing Gospels, impelled by his friends, and devinely moved by the Spirit, made a spiritual Gospel."

[14] Quoted from *The Bible in the Making*, Smyth.

[15] Writing about 200 A. D. Not to be confused with Clement of Rome already referred to.

Thus came into existence his "spiritual Gospel," portraying the inner life of Jesus as only John the mystic could have done, the Gospel whose pages are the first to be worn in most of our Bibles.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. Read Luke 1:1-4, and relate in detail what you are able to learn from him concerning the early records of the life of Jesus. What saying of Jesus not found in the Gospels does Paul quote? From what source did the fragmentary sayings of Jesus not found in the Gospels probably come?

2. What is meant by the Synoptic Gospels? Describe their similarities and differences. To what conclusion concerning their origin does their similarity lead us?

3. Who was Papias? Show his connection with the Apostles. What does he say concerning Matthew and Mark? From whom did he get his information?

4. What reason have we for thinking that the "Logia of Matthew" is not the Gospel of Matthew? What was it, and how composed?

5. Who was Mark? Show how the personality of Peter is reflected in Mark's story.

6. From what sources did Luke draw the material for his Gospel?

7. What materials were used in the Gospel according to Matthew?

8. How does John differ from the Synoptic Gospels? Sketch the evidences that it was written by John.

9. Describe the circumstances under which the Gospel of John was written?

"Christianity presents itself, then, to mankind, in a special sense, as an historical religion; that is, as a Gospel and a life centered in and based upon a certain group of historical events—the life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus of Nazareth and the mission of his Spirit to perpetuate his activity in his Church."

BISHOP CHARLES GORE.

"If ever there was a manifestation of the supernatural, it was in the condition of things out of which arose the New Testament. We have only to take up the Epistles of St. Paul and we find him surrounded, penetrated, permeated with the supernatural. It is, as it were, the very atmosphere which he breathes. He does not assert it. He does not need to assert it. . . . St. Paul assumes it as a fact everywhere present to the consciousness of his readers as much as to his own."

WILLIAM SANDAY.

"Christ! I am Christ's! and let the name suffice you,
Ay for me he greatly hath sufficed:
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you,
Paul has no honor and no friend but Christ."

MYERS.

"Little could Paul dream that for long centuries his living words would inspire the hearts of the Christian world, would fire the imagination of the saints, and call forth the deepest thoughts of its wisest men! They have been the quickeners of life and liberty, the spring of some of the mightiest movements that have affected human history."

R. D. SHAW.

CHAPTER X

ACTS AND THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Acts of the Apostles

The literary labors of Luke were by no means ended when he had written his incomparable Life of Jesus for his friend Theophilus. The book of Acts, addressed to the same Theophilus, is the second installment of his story. Picking up the threads of the narrative where he had left them at the end of his Gospel, Luke proceeds to relate in Acts the principal events in the history of the Apostolic Church as far as the second year of Paul's imprisonment at Rome.[1] As the Gospel of Luke is a record of the life and work of Jesus, Acts is a record of the life and work of the apostles whom he had chosen to carry on the work of the kingdom. The four Gospels would be incomplete without the book of Acts, for it portrays the triumphs of the faith after the coming of the Comforter whom Jesus had promised. In no other book of the New Testament is such prominence given the Holy Spirit. So striking is this feature that it has been suggested that the Acts might be properly called "the Gospel of the Holy Spirit."

The story of the Acts centers about the two most conspicuous leaders in the Apostolic Church, Peter and Paul.

[1] One cannot fail to feel the close relation between the Gospel of Luke and Acts if he will read the last verses of Luke and the first verses of Acts consecutively.

In the first twelve chapters the narrative is for the most part woven around the person of Simon Peter. About 47 A.D. a new leader appeared in the Church, one Saul of Tarsus, and from the thirteenth chapter of Acts to the end of the book his life and labors claim the whole of Luke's attention.

The Author of Acts and His Qualifications

God uses prepared men. He laid upon Luke the task of writing the book of Acts because he was the best fitted man of his age for this particular undertaking. He was a man with a liberal Greek education. The scholars say that his Greek comes nearer the standard of the classics than any Greek in the New Testament. He was a Spirit-filled man, as the power that radiates through all his writings abundantly proves. His personal association with Paul and his wide contacts throughout the Church gave him an enviable opportunity to gather and verify the facts that he wove into his story.

That Luke was a physician and traveling companion of Paul is unquestionably established by Paul's reference to him in his epistles. (See Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11.) Nowhere in Acts does Luke thrust himself forward, but he takes care to indicate by a turn of expression the times and places he was with Paul, and an eyewitness to the things he records. Through the first portion of Acts he invariably uses the third personal pronoun (he, she, they), indicating that he played no part in the narrative. In Acts 16:10 he suddenly changes his personal pronouns to *the first person plural* (we, us).

"When he [Paul] had seen the vision," Luke says, "straightway *we* sought to go over into Macedonia, concluding that God had called *us* to preach the gospel unto them." From this we conclude that Luke joined Paul at Troas. It appears most likely that the man from Macedonia who besought Paul to come into his country was none other than Luke. The words in the Greek are "a certain man of Macedonia," indicating that the man in Paul's vision was a definite person known by Paul and not a shadowy figure. The two strangers had met, as travelers do, in Troas. Possibly Paul called in the physician on account of illness. Luke was attracted to Paul, and no doubt discussed with him the needs of his country. The topics we have discussed and the faces we have seen during the day frequently linger in our minds at night. As Paul slept he "beheld a vision, his Macedonian friend beckoning him onward to his own country." Both of them interpreted this as a divine call, and hastened to Macedonia.[2] On Paul's departure from Philippi Luke begins to use again the third personal pronoun (Acts 16: 40), from which we gather that he at this time went no farther with the Apostle. When Paul returned to Philippi six or seven years later Luke again includes himself in the narrative, saying, "*We* sailed away from Philippi." (Acts 20: 6.) From this time it seems that Luke's association with Paul had few interruptions. He was with him on his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 17) and on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27: 1), and on the eve of his martyrdom (2 Tim. 4: 11). Luke's accuracy in details suggests that he kept a diary during his travels with Paul. The events in

[2] See *St. Paul, the Traveller*, Ramsay, pp. 200-205.

the apostle's life which he did not personally witness he could have gotten from Paul himself. What man was better qualified than Paul's physician and traveling companion to preserve for us the story of the labors of the first and greatest missionary of the Christian Church?

The materials for the first portion of Acts, in which Peter is the most conspicuous figure, Luke was under the necessity of obtaining from authoritative sources, since he nowhere appears as personally associated with the first apostles in their labors. The very interesting suggestion has been made that he secured much of his information from Philip, one of the seven deacons. Luke records that on one occasion he in company with Paul spent "many days" in Philip's home in Cæsarea. (Acts 21:8-13.) Paul was for more than two years a prisoner at Caesarea (Acts 24:27), and it is more than likely that his companion and physician would be frequently in the home of Philip, and that many would be their conversations concerning Philip's work in Samaria[3] and concerning the labors of Peter and John. Cornelius was a native of Cæsarea, and Luke probably heard the story of Peter's visit there from Cornelius's own lips. Luke was with Paul in Jerusalem and with him visited James and the elders of the Church. (Acts 21:18.) His extensive travels with Paul gave him abundant opportunity to become acquainted with the Christians in many places and

[3] See Acts 8. "Nothing can be more natural than that a visitor to Philip's house who was making it his business to gather authentic records of the apostles' labors should be glad to include in his collection a narrative so interesting, communicated to him by the very lips of the principal actor." (Salmon.)

to hear from their lips the incidents he narrates. These many contacts, together with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, rendered Luke eminently qualified to write the only authoritative history we have of the Apostolic Church. His avowed carefulness as a historian and his integrity of character assure us that the things he records are historical facts upon which our faith may rest securely. (Luke 1:1-4.)

The Interrupted Story

The only disappointing thing about the Acts is its abrupt ending. Luke leaves Paul in prison at Rome, and tells us nothing about his trial or the result of it. Was Paul awaiting trial when the book of Acts was concluded? Did some catastrophe befall Luke so that he was not able to complete his book? These are questions which we cannot answer. It appears, however, that Luke had planned a third book in which he would tell the story of the trial and subsequent labors of Paul. The development of the Acts and the emphasis given to Paul's former trials suggest this conclusion. The Greek word translated "former" in Acts 1:1 means in its proper usage the first of more than two, and this further suggests that Luke had in mind at least three books.[4] All of this, however, is conjectural. If he planned a third book, he was either unable to carry out his purpose or the book has been lost. The interrupted story must be filled in from other sources.

[4] The Greek word "protos" means the first of three or more. "Proteros" means the first of two. Luke uses "protos."

Paul and His Letters

In a singular way the inmost thoughts and feelings of the great are preserved to us in the letters which they leave behind. Not in the story of one's life which another writes, or in the appreciations of him written by his intimate friends, is the man most truly revealed, but in the letters which during his lifetime he has written out of his heart. When one has spent an evening perusing the personal correspondence of a man of another generation, he retires feeling that in the intimacies of his own drawing room he has met a great spirit of the past. No form of literature is more charming or more satisfying than the letters of gifted letter-writers. Of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, twenty-one are letters from leaders in the early Church. "Of old God addressed men in tones that were, so to speak, distant," says Bishop William Alexander. "But in the New Testament He Whom no man hath seen at any time 'interpreted' Himself with sweet familiarity. It is of a piece with the dispensation of condescendence that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven should come to us in such large measure through epistles. For a letter is just the result of taking up one's pen to converse with one who is absent, a familiar talk with a friend."[5]

Conspicuous among the gifted letter-writers of the world is the Apostle Paul. No other letters that have ever been written have been so widely read or have exerted so potent an influence over the thought and life of man. Through his Epistles Paul is the largest single

[5] Epistles of St. John, *Expositor's Bible*, p. 282.

contributor to the literature of the New Testament. Of the twenty-one letters found therein, thirteen, or nearly two-thirds, are accredited to him, and in length they make up about one-fourth of the New Testament Canon. Their theme is the light that had so recently shone in the world in the appearing of Jesus Christ. Everywhere and at all times Paul is interpreting Christ. But for all their magnificence, and for all their unparalleled expositions of the mysteries of God that have so profoundly influenced the thought of Christendom, the Epistles of Paul are full of the personal charm so characteristic of great letters. They begin with the most friendly salutations. They end for the most part with affectionate greetings to absent friends, often designating them by name.[6] Through each of them one feels the warm heart of the Apostle as he writes to instruct, rebuke, and comfort those whom he had begotten in the Gospel. The result is an interpretation of Christ by the master soul of the Apostolic Church, cast in the sweetly intimate form of personal letters.

The Letters of Paul

The limits of our studies forbid that we enter into a discussion of the vexing question whether or not Paul wrote all the epistles accredited to him. For the past fifty years this has been a hotly contested question, but the smoke of battle is already clearing away and the results of careful investigation and heated controversy have only served to establish more firmly than ever before the genuineness of the epistles commonly attributed to Paul.

[6] Note in particular Romans 16, following the ponderous argument of Paul's greatest epistle.

"I must needs believe that all the epistles which have come down to us as his are genuine," says Prof. William Sanday. "I cannot imagine that a conscientious opponent of these letters who, when he laid down his pen, would turn around to look back over the argument by which he had been led to deny their genuineness, could honestly say that they were conclusive." To this conclusion this little volume is thoroughly committed. The testimony which the epistles bear to one another,[7] their specific statements as to their authorship, their correspondence with the events in the Apostle's life, the master-spirit so evident in all of them, the early witness of the Church to their genuineness—all these evidences stamp the Pauline Epistles as genuine products of Paul's pen.

Rather than maintaining that Paul wrote less than thirteen epistles, it should be pointed out that he wrote more, and that only thirteen have been preserved to us. In 2 Thessalonians, written about 52 A.D. and the oldest of his letters appearing in the New Testament except 1 Thessalonians, he says: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle.[8] "Every epistle" are words which evidently indicate that Paul had

[7] For instance, 2 Thessalonians is clearly linked to 1 Thessalonians, Romans is an enlargement of Galatians, Colossians 4:9 makes reference to Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon, etc.

[8] 2 Thessalonians 3:17. It was Paul's custom to dictate his letters to a helper, as a busy man to-day dictates his letters to a stenographer. This he did possibly from preference, being able to concentrate his mind to better advantage, or probably from necessity on account of weakness of the eyes. Romans 16:22 definitely states that the epistle was dictated to one Tertius.

at this time written more letters than the two to the Thessalonians, and that his letters were already so well known that he had to take precautions against forgery. In his first letter to the Corinthians he mentions a previous letter to them, which has been lost. (1 Cor. 5:9.) We may safely assume that out of the larger personal correspondence of Paul, thirteen letters have been preserved in the New Testament, just as the story of the life of Jesus is preserved only in part in the Gospels. (John 21:25.)

The Circumstances Which Prompted Paul to Write

The letters of Paul were occasional; that is, they were written to meet particular situations which confronted the Apostle in his arduous ministry. The Churches established by him were in part made up of Gentile converts, raw recruits from paganism, and it is no wonder that in such congregations, in a heathen society, many problems of faith and conduct arose. Paul daily carried the care of the churches on his great heart (2 Cor. 11:28), but in a parish that reached from Jerusalem to Rome it was impossible for him to give any of them continual personal oversight. Moreover, when he was at the zenith of his career he was for four or five years a prisoner of state, confined at Cæsarea and then at Rome. Under these circumstances he resorted to the only method by which he might effectually encourage, rebuke, instruct, and direct the Churches which were the especial objects of his solicitude. Out of his spirit-filled heart he wrote concerning the things wherein the churches needed his immediate guidance. Sometimes he writes in heaviness of spirit

because of their deflections from the truth (Gal. 3:1); sometimes in joyous remembrance of their devotion to him and of their faithfulness to the Gospel (1 Thes. 1:2-4; Phil. 1:3-6); sometimes in spiritual ecstasy as he discusses the "mystery hid from the ages, but now made manifest" (Col. 1:26); at all times interpreting Christ Jesus, of whom he was an apostle and preacher. Our studies would not be complete did we not take some note of the circumstances under which the different letters of Paul were written.

It was probably in the spring of 50 A.D.,[9] shortly after the memorable Council of Jerusalem, that Paul, in company with Silas, started on his second missionary journey. (Acts 15:36-41.) None of the Apostle's letters that have come down to us were written prior to this date. After a considerable itinerary through Syria, Galicia, and Galatia, confirming the Churches in the faith, Paul and Silas sailed from Troas into Macedonia, and at Philippi Paul delivered his first sermon on European soil. (Acts 16.) Driven from Philippi, they came to Thessalonica and established a congregation of believers. The preaching of the gospel again aroused opposition, and Paul and Silas went to Berea, and from thence to Athens. (Acts 17.) In September, 51 A.D., Paul, greatly depressed in spirit from buffetings on every hand, came to Corinth. (Acts 18.)

In the meantime Paul had sent Timothy back to Thes-

[9] See *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, Ramsay, p. 174. In fixing the dates of the Epistles the author has followed mostly the chronology of Ramsay, and for a more detailed account the student is referred to his book.

salonica to see how fared the infant Church there. Timothy returned with a most encouraging report. The Thessalonians were steadfast in their faith. Their confidence in Paul remained unshaken despite all the calumnies that had been heaped upon him. They loved him and desired to see his face again. (1 Thess. 3:6-8.) The Apostle's heart was overflowing with gratitude. In his own terse language he says that "he lived again." He wrote them a letter to tell them of his joy, at Timothy's report. "For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you," writes this minister of Christ to the faithful in Thessalonica.

These are the circumstances which prompted Paul to write First Thessalonians. It is the oldest of his letters preserved to us and *it was the first of our New Testament books to be written.* In the fall of 51 A.D. a preacher wrote a letter of encouragement to his converts in another city, and that letter was the beginning of the New Testament.

Timothy on his arrival in Corinth had reported that the Church at Thessalonica was not a little perturbed over the state of believers who should die before the second coming of Christ, and in the latter portion of his letter Paul endeavored to quiet their fears "concerning them that are asleep." (1 Thess. 4:13-18.)[10] "It has never been easy for one to speak or write on these subjects without being misunderstood. Men quickly allow their imaginations and emotions to play around such themes. They fly off at a hint." The Thessalonians misunder-

[10] Many in the Church at that time looked for the immediate return of the Lord. See p. 115.

stood the import of Paul's words concerning the coming of the Lord. Looking for Jesus's immediate return, they withdrew themselves from the ordinary vocations of life, "working not at all." Tidings of this condition reached Paul at Corinth, whereupon he wrote a second letter, probably in the early part of 52 A.D., explaining his first letter and admonishing them to an industrious and orderly life. (Note particularly 2 Thess. 2:3-6; 3:7-15.)

After completing his second missionary journey, Paul returned to Antioch. (Acts 18:22.) If our chronology is correct, this was in the spring of 53 A. D. Disheartening news awaited him from the Churches in Galatia.[11] Following Paul's tour through Galatia certain Judaizers from Jerusalem had visited the Churches, teaching that to be a Christian it was necessary to observe all the ordinances of Judaism. Was not Christ a Jew? Was he not circumcised, and did he not keep the law? Is the servant greater than his lord? So the Judaizers argued with telling effect. Paul had not been a disciple of Jesus, they said, and therefore was not properly an apostle. They impugned his motives, they questioned his integrity, and many of the Galatians were won by their arguments. (Gal. 1:6; 3:1.) As soon as all of this came to the ears of Paul he sent a letter to the Churches of Galatia, and that letter was none other than the Epistle to the Galatians

[11] See *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen,* Ramsay, pp. 189 ff. The Galatian country referred to in the Acts was, in the opinion of the writer, the country in the south of Asia Minor, visited by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. For detailed account see Ramsay, Chapters V, VI, and VIII.

found in our New Testament. "The Epistle is a noble plea for the emancipation of Christianity from the bondage of Judaism. Had that not been accomplished, Christianity, instead of stretching out to a world-wide dominion, would have shrunk to the dwindling career of a Jewish sect."[12] The Epistle has been called the Magna Charta of Christian liberty. Fifteen hundred years later this letter of about a half dozen pages moved Martin Luther to take his stand against the priestcraft of Rome. It "was the pebbles from the brook with which he, like another David, went forth to meet the papal giant and smite him in the forehead."

Shortly after sending this Epistle, Paul made another tour of the Galatian Churches (Acts 18:23) and from thence went to Ephesus (Acts 19:1), where he remained for two or three years. Ephesus was not very far from Corinth, and through friends coming and going between the two cities he kept in touch with the Corinthian Church. (1 Cor. 1:11.) Paul became greatly exercised concerning the situation there, and wrote them a letter which has been lost. (1 Cor. 5:9.) In reply to this they wrote him explaining the situation and asking his opinion concerning certain matters. (1 Cor. 7:1.) This elicited from him a second letter which is our First Corinthians. He shames them for the unbrotherly contentions that had divided the Church into many factions, and proceeds to instruct them concerning such questions as marriage, customs of women, the Lord's Supper,[13] the

[12] *The Pauline Epistles,* Shaw, p. 100.

[13] In no other epistle does Paul mention the Lord's Supper. "But for the faults of the worldly and selfish Christians of Cor-

resurrection, and other matters pertaining to the Christian life.

First Corinthians was most likely written in the late autumn of 55 A. D., and some months later, following an uproar instigated by one Demetrius, a silversmith, Paul left Ephesus and crossed over into Macedonia. He was anxious for tidings from the Church at Corinth. At Philippi or Thessalonica, Titus, whom he had previously sent to Corinth, joined him with a most heartening report. (2 Cor. 7:6.) On hearing from Titus how his entreaties had been received by the Corinthians, he wrote yet another letter to them, telling of his joy and defending his authority as an apostle. This is our Second Corinthians, written probably in the summer of 56 A.D.

In December 56 A.D. Paul arrived in Corinth, and remained there three months, during which time he wrote a letter to the Romans. He was hoping to visit them shortly, and from Rome to carry the gospel into Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). This great doctrinal treatise, which is an argumentative interpretation of the Christian faith addressed to the Church at the capital of the Empire, is Paul's masterpiece.

Paul's visit to Rome was delayed by his arrest at Jerusalem. Finally, in the year 60 A.D. he reached the Imperial City, "an ambassador in bonds," as he proudly calls himself. (Eph. 6:20.) He was treated with utmost consideration, being permitted under the guard of a soldier to live in his hired house and to receive his friends

inth, we might never have obtained a single glimpse into the mind of Paul on the subject of the Lord's Supper." (*The Sacraments of the New Testament,* Lambert, p. 386.)

freely. (Acts 28:30.) In prison the zealous shepherd of the flock kept in touch with his Churches. In 61 A.D. he probably wrote three letters: Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon. These prison letters are hopeful and full of energy. He was expecting an early acquittal and to return to his friends in Colosse. (Philemon 22.) In 62 A.D. the Church at Philippi sent him a purse, and in response Paul, out of "his large sympathies, his womanly tenderness, his delicate courtesy," wrote his letter to the Philippians. (Phil. 4:10-19.) It is the most delightful of all his letters. His trial had possibly begun and the apostle was confident that he would return to them shortly. (Phil. 1:25, 26.)

The authorship of the three Pastoral Epistles, Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy, has been a matter of heated debate for more than a century. Some scholars have maintained that Paul wrote none of them; others have argued that parts of them were written by Paul, and to this Pauline nucleus additions were made by later hands. Into this vexing question we cannot enter.[14] The author of this volume accepts the Pastorals as genuine products of Paul's pen.

"Did Paul write the Pastoral Epistles? It is a fashion in certain circles to say no. When men say he did not write them, they are guessing. When it is said that in their present form they are not Paul's work, but that in them one finds undoubtedly genuine Pauline material, that also is a guess. No man now alive knows

[14] The student is referred to *Pauline Epistles,* Shaw, pp. 425-496; *Introduction to New Testament,* Salmon, pp. 397-413.

enough to pick out of the Pastoral Epistles the Pauline sentences from those written by another pen. All such alleged learning is only guesswork. For my part, I guess that Paul wrote all the three Pastoral Epistles. I have earned my right to guess by reading everything of importance published on the question within the last fifty years, and by living with the Apostle on intimate terms summer and winter, day and night, for more than a third of a century. I may be pardoned for claiming the right to say I know him. I know his accents, his intonations, his overtones and his undertones, his subtle mannerisms, and the flavor of his individuality. Because I know him, I am sure he wrote the Pastoral Epistles." [15]

At what time in his career did Paul write these letters to Titus and Timothy? We cannot very easily fit them anywhere in the story of Paul as told in the Acts. We have already observed the abrupt ending of the Acts. (See p. 139.) It is possible that Luke did not complete the story of Paul's life? A statement made by Clement of Rome in his Epistle, written not more than thirty years after Paul's death, may throw light on this question: "For the same cause did Paul in like manner receive the reward of his patience; . . . and having taught the whole world righteousness, and for that end traveled even as far west as Spain, he at last suffered martyrdom by the command of the governors." In his letter to the Romans Paul had expressed his purpose to go to Spain. He seems finally to have gone there. From this we conclude that Paul was released after his first trial before Cæsar, at the point in his career where the Acts ends, 62

[15] *The Character of Paul,* Charles E. Jefferson, pp. 23, 24.

A.D., and that he continued his ministry for a period of three or four years before his second trial and execution. This conclusion is supported by early traditions in the Church.

In the opinion of the writer the Pastoral Epistles fall in this latter period of the Apostle's career. First Timothy and Titus were probably written during the years of his liberation for the purpose of guiding these younger preachers in the work of the ministry. Second Timothy was written during his second imprisonment at Rome. He does not hope, as formerly, to be released. The time of his departure is at hand. (2 Tim. 4:6.) He instructs Timothy to bring his coat and books from Troas, indicating that he had recently been there. (Tim. 4:13.) "Paul is said," says Eusebius, writing about 300 A.D., "after having defended himself, to have gone forth again upon the ministry of preaching, and to have entered the same city [Rome] a second time, and to have there ended his life by martyrdom. Whilst then a prisoner, he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, in which he both mentions his first defense and his impending death."

The correspondence of Paul which has been preserved to us begins with First Thessalonians and ends with Second Timothy. Shortly after writing this last epistle, in 65 A.D., under the persecutions of Nero, the great missionary and preacher probably sealed his labors with his blood.

Little did Paul think his letters would some day be revered as Scripture, on a plane with the Law and the Prophets. They who labor in the power of the Spirit accomplish things of which they never dream. Under the

providence of God, the personal correspondence of the Apostle to the Gentiles, written out of a Spirit-illumined soul to the Churches of his generation, has been elevated to the dignity of Scripture to guide the Church of all ages to an understanding of the person and work of Christ. Into them Paul has poured the substance of the faith and preaching which in the days of the Apostles turned the world upside down. They will be an authoritative guide to the Church as long as she proclaims to the world "the grace of God that bringeth salvation."

Early Collections of Paul's Letters

The letters of Paul were addressed to certain Churches to be read publicly before the congregation (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27), and it is no wonder that they were highly prized. The several Churches would not only be interested in the letters addressed to them, but also in the letters sent by Paul to other Churches dealing with the vital questions of Christian faith and conduct. At an early date there was an exchange of copies of Paul's letters among the Churches. It was not long before collections of these letters were to be found in many places. Even Philemon would permit copies of the charming letter he had received from the Apostle on a strictly personal matter to be made, in order that the collections might be as complete as possible. The author of 2 Peter is acquainted with a collection of the letters of "Our beloved brother Paul." (2 Pet. 3:16.) In 95 A.D. Clement wrote from Rome a letter to the Corinthians.[16] He shows acquaintance with a number of Paul's Epistles, from

[16]Possibly the same Clement referred to in Philippians 4:3.

which we conclude that at that early date a collection of them existed in Rome. Already these letters were regarded as high authority. By common consent, they and other books of our New Testament were held in a reverent esteem not accorded other writings. The Epistles of Paul were not yet accepted as Scripture, but by 100 A.D. many, if not all of them, had been brought together in accredited collections; and were appealed to as authority and regarded with veneration. At the close of the century in which Christ lived a long step had been taken in the process that eventually gave these writings a place in our Christian Bible.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. State clearly the relation between the four Gospels and the Acts, and between Luke and the Acts in particular. Indicate the two general divisions of the Acts.

2. What qualifications made Luke preëminently suited to write the Acts? How does Luke indicate the time and places he was with Paul? From what sources did he possibly get the material for other portions of his story?

3. What possible explanation can you offer for the abrupt ending of the Acts?

4. Do you experience any charm in reading the published letters of great men and women? Why? Has this any application to the letters of Paul? Explain your answer.

5. What is the position of the author concerning the authorship of the Pauline Epistles? What evidence have we that some of Paul's letters have been lost?

6. What is meant by the statement that Paul's letters were occasional? What general condition prompted the Apostle to send letters to particular Churches?

7. Read carefully Acts 15:36-21:17, locating the places in the story where, according to the author, 1 and 2 Thessalonians,

Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans were written, indicating same on the margin of your Bible. Relate the immediate circumstances which led to the writing of each, giving the date of each.

8. Name the epistles of Paul's first imprisonment. Characterize each. What evidence have we that he was released after his first trial? What, according to the author, was the date of his release?

9. When were the Pastoral Epistles written? What statements in 2 Timothy indicate that the letter was written during the second imprisonment? What was the probable date of Paul's martyrdom? How long was this after the resurrection of Jesus?

10. What evidences have we of an early collection of Paul's letters? Indicate clearly the progress made by 100 A.D. toward recognizing them as Scripture.

"Our mirror is a blessed book,
Where out from each illumed page
We see one glorious image look,
All eyes to dazzle and engage.

The Son of God; and that indeed
We see Him as He is we know,
Since in the same bright glass we read
The very life of things below.

Eye of God's Word, where'er we turn
Ever upon us! thy keen gaze
Can all the depths of sin discern,
Unravel every bosom's maze."

KEBLE.

"Let us be thankful that John *'tarried.'* He has left the Church three pictures that can never fade—in the Gospel the picture of Christ, in the Epistles the picture of his own soul, in the Apocalypse the picture of heaven."

WILLIAM ALEXANDER.

"John was not so much the great missionary with his sacred restlessness; not so much the oratorical expositor of prophecy. . . . He was the theologian; the quiet master of the secrets of the spiritual life; the calm strong controversialist who excludes error by constructing truth."

WILLIAM ALEXANDER.

"There is hardly any portion in the word of God which has been more eagerly read than this Epistle [First Peter] by those who were pressed by many trials and weaknesses. By exiles in distant lands, shut out from human tenderness; by travelers and voyagers; by persecuted and suffering saints . . . by those whom sore sickness or venerable age may have incapacitated from meeting with the visible Church—these words have been lovingly pondered, and treasured as a priceless heritage."

F. B. MEYER.

CHAPTER XI

HEBREWS, THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES, AND REVELATION

The Epistle to the Hebrews

In enumerating the letters of Paul in the chapter preceding, the Epistle to the Hebrews was not included. It is an accepted conclusion by most Biblical scholars that this epistle was not written by Paul. He was known as the Apostle to the Gentiles, and his ministry fell for the most part among people outside the fold of Judaism. It would hardly be expected of him, therefore, to address a letter exclusively to the Hebrews. Furthermore, the literary style is very different from that so familiar to us in the thirteen recognized epistles of Paul. "There is none of the ruggedness of Paul, who never seems to be solicitous about forms of expression, and whose thoughts come pouring out so fast as to jostle one another in the struggle for utterance. This is a calm composition, exhibiting sonorous words and well balanced sentences." The epistle makes no claim to having been written by Paul.[1] There is no salutation with his name affixed, as at the beginning of each of his thirteen epistles. In the

[1] The title, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," appearing in the King James Version of the Bible, is not properly a part of the text, but an addition affixed by editors many centuries after Hebrews was written.

Muratorian Fragment, which furnishes the oldest list of New Testament books of which we have any knowledge, dating from about 170 A.D., and in which the thirteen epistles of Paul are named, the Epistle to the Hebrews does not appear. Its authorship was an open question among the most learned fathers of the early Church.

That the Epistle to the Hebrews was, however, a product of the Church of the Apostles there can be no doubt. It was written to Jewish Christians who were about to fall away from the faith and return to Judaism, showing them by masterful argument the superiority of the new dispensation over the old. It appears to have been addressed to a Jewish Christian congregation, presumably in Jerusalem, and written by one who was sojourning in Italy, possibly at Rome.[2] The epistle refers to the sacrifices of the temple as being then observed. It must, therefore, have been written prior to 70 A.D., when the Romans sacked Jerusalem, destroying the temple, and put an end to the sacrifices, which to this good day have not been revived. In the latter part of the First Century there lived in Rome a very interesting person named Clement to whom reference was made in the preceding chapter. Ancient authorities say he was third successor to Peter in the bishopric of Rome. In his letter to the Corinthians, a copy of which lies on the writer's desk, he shows decided regard for the Epistle to the Hebrews, possibly referring to it oftener than to any of our New Testament books. From all these facts we conclude that Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem and

[2] The expression, "They of Italy salute you," 13:24, leads us to this conclusion.

that, when Clement wrote, it was held in as high esteem as the Epistles of Paul.

If Paul did not write Hebrews, who did? Many guesses have been ventured. Luther guessed Apollos. Others have guessed Timothy or Clement or Priscilla. Tertullian, a bishop living in North Africa about 200 A.D. and a man versed in the Scriptures, says it was written by Barnabas, the early companion of Paul. This appears to the writer to be the most plausible suggestion, but it is by no means proven. Origen, a master of the Scriptures, writing a little later, says, "Who wrote the Epistle God only knows certainly," and we may well leave it there.

Seven Catholic Epistles

Great words, like a country's natural resources, may be monopolized in the interest of a class or party. "Catholic," one of the rich words of our language, has been so commonly used to designate a particular branch of the Christian Church that for many it has lost its broader meaning. "Catholic" means comprehensive, universal. This is the meaning of the word as it is employed in the Apostles' Creed where we declare our belief in "the holy catholic Church"; that is, the universal Church of God embracing all believers without regard to denominational distinctions.[3]

[3] The term Catholic was originally used to designate the whole body of Christian believers. Ignatius, writing near the beginning of the Second Century, says, "Where Jesus Christ is, *there is the Catholic* Church." This is the first instance in Christian literature where the phrase "Catholic Church" is used and clearly illustrates its original usage. In 1054 A.D. the Church was

As early as the Fourth Century, and possibly earlier, the Epistles of Peter, John, James, and Jude were grouped together, and in order to distinguish them from the Epistles of Paul were called the "Catholic Epistles." They were so called because they were general letters, addressed to no particular Church, as to the Church at Rome or at Corinth, but to the whole body of believers, the Catholic Church, or at any rate to a wide circle of readers. Unhappily, this term does not truly describe all of them. 2 John, for instance, was not addressed to the Church at large, but to a particular Church which the writer called "the Elect Lady" (2 John 1), and 3 John was addressed to a certain individual named Gaius (2 John 1). The title "Catholic Epistles," however, is of long standing, and for purposes of convenience it is well that it be preserved. Possibly the most interesting fact connected with this group of epistles is that

Two Were Written by Brothers of Jesus

Out of the little Nazareth home where Jesus grew to maturity came, in the opinion of the writer, the James and Jude who wrote the epistles that bear their names, respectively. In an incidental way the Gospel story records the names of the four brothers of Jesus: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (or Jude). (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3.)

divided into the Eastern and Western sections. The Church in the East was designated the Orthodox Church, while the Church in the West, of which Rome was the center, called itself the Catholic Church. These titles have remained. At the time of the Reformation the Roman Church claimed exclusive right to the title Catholic, but this has been constantly denied by Protestant Churches.

These were according to our best information the sons of Mary and Joseph, born after the advent of Jesus. Theirs was the sacred privilege of living under the same roof with the Son of Mary and the Son of God. When he began his public ministry, however, they regarded him with manifest anxiety (Matt. 12:46-50), and refused to accept him as Israel's promised Messiah (John 7:5). "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and *in his own house,*" said Jesus on one occasion, and in the last phrase he doubtless had reference to the unbelief of his brethren.

Things changed with them after the Lord's resurrection. Paul makes special note of the fact that after his resurrection Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7), and this he might have learned from James's own lips when he was with him in Jerusalem a few years after the event. (Gal. 1:19.) The appearance of Jesus may have been the occasion of James's conversion. Before the day of Pentecost the brethren of Jesus were with their mother in the upper room in Jerusalem waiting for the gift of the Spirit. (Acts 1:14.) A little later James was a very prominent figure in the Church at Jerusalem. (Acts 12:17, etc.) One of the earliest of the Church Fathers says that "Peter, James,[4] and John, after our Lord's ascension, were not ambitious of dignity . . . but chose James the Just as Bishop of Jerusalem." All early authorities are of one voice that he was the first to preside over the Mother Church.

As Paul was called to minister in particular to the

[4] James the disciple, the son of Zebedee, must not be confused with James the Lord's brother.

Gentiles, it fell to James, the head of the Church in Jerusalem, to minister in an especial way to the Jews. He addressed a letter to "the twelve tribes which are of the dispersion," Christian Jews scattered in every part of the Roman world. He does not call himself the Lord's brother, but a "servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." He writes as a Jew to Jews, emphasizing the necessity of keeping the precepts of the law in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He writes as one who had heard the discourses of Jesus, and treasured them in his memory. Many passages in the epistle show striking resemblances to the discourses of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and to the Sermon on the Mount in particular. In it are possibly reflected to better advantage than anywhere else the simple virtues and the high standards of the Nazareth home where Jesus and James grew to maturity, and for this reason it has an especial interest for every Christian.[5]

Jude describes himself as a brother of James. Since he does not tell us to what James he refers, we conclude that he meant the most conspicious James of that time, the head of the Jerusalem Church and a leader of prominence among the Apostles. An interesting story concerning the family of Jude is preserved by one Hegesippus, who lived in the Second Century: "Informers attempted to incite the jealousy of Domitian [Roman Emperor, 81-96 A.D.] against two of our Lord's family, 'grandsons of Jude who is said to have been his brother after the flesh.' On being questioned by the emperor as to their property, they told him that they had no money, and

[5] On this point see *Introduction to New Testament*, Salmon, p. 466.

possessed only a small farm. . . . Then they showed him their hands, and when he saw them horny with continual toil he was convinced with the truth of their story. . . . The Emperor, regarding them as beneath his jealousy, dismissed them; and they survived to the reign of Trajan, [Emperor, 98-117 A.D.] held in honor in the Churches, both on account of their confession and their kindred to our Lord."

Peter Writes

There can be no doubt that among the readers of Paul's letters to the Churches was Simon Peter, the well-known disciple of Jesus. The first epistle which bears his name shows a decided affinity to the thought and even the terminology of the Apostle to the Gentiles, and to his letters to the Romans and Ephesians in particular. We may assume that Peter, who had been a preacher rather than a writer, was impressed with the effectiveness of Paul's letters in encouraging the Churches and in stabilizing Christian doctrine among the congregations scattered from Jerusalem to Rome. Therefore when the Church was facing a grave crisis Peter addressed a letter to "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion" (1 Pet. 1:1), in order "to establish them in believing, to direct them in doing, and to comfort them in suffering," as Bishop Leighton pithily puts it. This is the letter that is preserved in the New Testament under the title "The First Epistle of Peter."

The tone and content of the letter make it clear that those who bore the name of Christian were about to pass through a fiery trial on account of their faith. It is gen-

erally agreed that the ordeal which was imminent was Nero's persecutions which fell in 64 A.D. Peter was a man with a warm sympathetic heart, and the thought of the faithful suffering for the Lord whom he loved so devotedly moved him deeply. So wonderfully did the Spirit-filled fisherman and Apostle write to a persecuted people of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," that he has earned for himself the title, "the Apostle of Hope." At the end of his letter he conveys to the Churches the Christian salutation of the Church at Babylon. "Babylon" was a mystic name for Rome used by Christians of that day, from which we conclude that the letter was written by Peter from Rome. Possibly he was there with Paul. It was near the time of Paul's martyrdom and one can imagine the Apostle to the Gentiles having in his cell with him during his last days an autograph copy of Peter's great Epistle and in the light of its radiant optimism strengthening himself for the fate that awaited him.

Of all the books in the New Testament Canon it must be frankly admitted that Second Peter has the scantiest proof of its genuineness. Not a few eminent Christian scholars have denied that it was written by Peter, and have maintained that it was a product of the Second Century. The epistle is not mentioned by any Christian writer until the Third Century, and Origen, the first to refer to it, expresses doubt as to its authenticity. But the fact that it does not appear to have been known does not necessarily mean that it was not a product of Peter's pen. It may only mean that it had a limited circulation. The epistle distinctly claims to have been written by Peter.

(2 Pet. 1:1.) The author speaks of himself as a witness of the Transfiguration. (2 Pet. 1:18.) He further speaks of himself as the author of the First Epistle and as being an equal with Paul. (2 Pet. 3:1, 15.) Who else could this have been save Simon Peter? If it were written by another than Peter, what motive could have led him to falsify the record in the interest of Christian truth? The words of one of the greatest Biblical scholars of the last generation should at least make one reticent to deny that the epistle is Peter's. "I put the question to him," says Prof. Sanday, "what he thought of this Epistle [2 Peter]. He replied that if he were asked he should say that the balance of argument was against the Epistle—and the moment he had done so he should begin to think that he might be wrong." [6]

John Writes Three Letters

In our studies in the origin of the four Gospels certain facts were noted which point conclusively to the fact that the Apostle John published the Gospel which bears his name near the close of the First Century. Most of the things said concerning the Fourth Gospel are applicable to the First Epistle of John as well; for the connection between the two is very close. In the Muratorian Fragment, to which reference has already been made, First John does not appear among the Epistles, but with the Gospel of John.[7] From this fact Bishop Lightfoot has

[6] *Inspiration*, Sanday, p. 347.

[7] 1 John 1:1-4 most evidently refers to the Gospel according to John as immediately preceding, and, apart from the Fourth Gospel, it would be quite difficult to interpret its meaning.

masterfully argued that the Epistle was originally a "commendatory postscript" to the Gospel, giving a summary of what the author intended the Gospel to teach. In the opinion of the writer it was originally published as a guide and a key to the Fourth Gospel, and was written about the same time. Being an appendix to the Gospel, there was no need that it be addressed to a particular community or that the name of the author be inscribed, both of which are omitted from the Epistle. Second and Third John are two short letters saved from out of what must have been a large personal correspondence, for John during his residence in Ephesus had oversight of the Churches in the surrounding country.[8] The two short epistles are so like the First Epistle in spirit and content that there can be no plausible doubt about their genuineness.

Revelation

Out of the stress and trials visited upon the Church during the last quarter of the First Century emerged the book of Revelation, its message veiled in many a figure and allegory. Like the First Epistle of Peter it was written to enhearten a persecuted Church, and to assure her of the final triumph of Christ. The writer says that his name is John. He declares that the revelation which

[8] "He (John) would go away when invited to the neighboring districts of the Gentiles, here to appoint bishops, there to form new Churches, and there to put into the office of the ministry some one of those that were indicated by the Spirit," says Clement of Alexandria, writing about 200 A.D. The seven Churches of Asia (Rev. 2 and 3) were possibly under his care.

he is about to relate came to him on the Isle called Patmos, he having been banished thither on account of his witnessing for Christ. A recently discovered fragment, written by one Leucius about 130 A.D., says that John the disciple of Jesus went from Ephesus to Patmos. The first of the seven letters is addressed to the Church at Ephesus, and we know that Ephesus was the home of the Apostle John's old age and that the Church there would naturally be the first in the lonely exile's thought. These facts lead us to the supposition that the John who inscribes his name on this strange book is none other than the beloved disciple of Jesus. Ancient witness confirms our supposition. Justin Martyr, writing about 140 A.D., attributes Revelation to John, the Apostle. Irenæus, whom we will remember as a disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of John, likewise affirms the authorship of John, adding, "For it was not long ago that the vision was seen, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian." The straightforward testimony of honest men who were in a position to know the facts weighs more with the writer of these lines than the many difficulties that have been raised concerning the Johannine authorship.

John, the son of Zebedee and the intimate companion of Jesus, was, if the conclusions of this little volume are correct, the author of five of our New Testament books and the second largest contributor to our New Testament Canon.

Our studies have brought us to the end of the New Testament period. An examination into the circumstances under which the books of the New Testament Canon

were produced convinces one that they were written before the generation of men who knew Jesus in the flesh had passed from earth. They were penned by men who were either eyewitnesses to the things they wrote or were in position to know the actual facts, and by men whose hearts were illumined by the Spirit whom Jesus had promised. They lived in the bridal days of the Church. God had very recently revealed Himself in an unprecedented way in his Son. The Man of Galilee was a holy memory, and the Spirit of God was a present reality working wonders in the infant Church. In the midst of these spacious years and out of Spirit-illumined hearts the Apostles wrote. Their writings are an authoritative interpretation of the facts and doctrines of Christ's Gospel by men who lived when its light first broke over the world. Through the written record the old story of how God revealed himself in Jesus Christ is preserved for all ages. Otherwise it might have been lost. But, as it is, each generation can find in the New Testament the Father's love revealed. It is an old story, but ever new, and as deeply satisfying after nineteen centuries have gone as it was to John and Paul.

Each year the river Nile, swollen by waters from the uplands, overflows its banks. After the waters have receded a fertile deposit is left which makes the delta of Egypt like a veritable garden. The New Testament is the deposit left in the world after the high tide of God's revelation in the First Century. Those eventful years are forever gone. Jesus no longer walks in the flesh among men, and Paul no more visits the Churches, proclaiming that the just shall live by faith. But they have

left their message behind them. The tide has receded, but the deposit remains. It is the New Testament, the fertile word of God which makes the desert to blossom like the rose.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. State clearly the reasons assigned in support of the conclusion that Paul is not the author of Hebrews. If Paul did not write it, would that fact in any sense invalidate it as a part of the New Testament? Justify your answer.

2. What evidence have we that the epistle was a product of the first century? What condition prompted the author to write?

3. What does "catholic" mean? In what sense is it used in the Apostles' Creed? How did this title come to be used to designate one particular denomination? What books of the New Testament are called the "Catholic Epistles"? What does this title mean as applied to them, and is it an accurate description?

4. Name the brothers of Jesus. What was their attitude toward him during his ministry? Trace as fully as you can the career of James from references to him in the New Testament.

5. To whom is the Epistle of James addressed, and what is its general character? How does Jude designate himself in his epistle? Relate the story concerning Jude's grandsons?

6. What evidence is there that Peter was acquainted with the Epistles of Paul? To whom was his first letter addressed, and for what immediate purpose was it written?

7. State clearly the evidence cited for and against the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter.

8. Show the relation between 1 John and the Gospel according to John. Characterize 2 and 3 John. What evidence have we that Revelation was written by the Apostle John?

9. What outstanding facts are established by an investigation into the origin of the books of the New Testament? Under what conditions did the authors write? Do you think we are justified in saying that they, writing under these conditions, were inspired men? Explain your answer.

"The Canon of Scripture was formed not suddenly by some startling miracle, not officially by some decision of Synod, or Bishop, or Saint, but slowly, gradually, half unconsciously, by the quiet influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men in the Church. 'The Bible was formed even as the Church itself was formed, by that Holy Spirit who was the life of both.'"

SMYTH.

"The Bible? That's the book, the book indeed,
The Book of books
On which who looks
As he should do, aright, shall never need
Wish for a better light
To guide him in the night."

GEORGE HERBERT.

"I attribute my enlightenment entirely and simply to the reading of a book. Yes! and it is an old homely book, modest as nature—a book which has a look modest as the sun which warms us, as the bread which nourishes us—a book as full of love and blessing as the old mother who reads in it with her dear trembling lips, and this book is *the* Book, the Bible. With right it is named the Holy Scriptures. He who has lost his God can find Him again in this Book, and he who has never known Him is here struck by the breath of the Divine Word."

HEINE.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANONIZED

The Questions Yet to be Answered

At the beginning of these studies it was indicated that our inquiries into the history of the Canon involve three questions:

First, how did the respective portions of the Bible originate?

Second, how were these separated from contemporaneous religious literature?

Third, by what process were the many parts brought together in one book, the Bible, and recognized to be the authoritative word of God?

The four chapters preceding have been devoted to answering in a very cursory fashion the first of these three questions as it relates to the New Testament. It remains for us in this concluding chapter to trace the process by which the books of the New Testament were separated from other Christian literature of that time and finally received with the Old Testament into the Canon of Scripture.

Our inquiries into the origin of the books of the New Testament, though limited, nevertheless establish the fact that they are genuine products of the Apostolic Church, and written by men who not only lived in the glorious years when Jesus was on the earth, but whose souls were also illumined to an unparalleled degree by the Spirit of

God. From the first these writings were held in highest regard by the Churches, and recognized as a guide in matters of faith and conduct. They were not however, at the first, regarded as Scripture. The Old Testament was the only recognized Canon in the days of the Apostles. All references in the New Testament to "the Scriptures" refer to the Old Testament exclusively. It was only a question of time, however, before the relation between the Old Testament and the New was seen and the two were brought together into the Christian's Bible. If Prophets and Psalmists could speak with authority concerning God, how much more Christ and the Apostles whom he commissioned. If the record of God's gradual revelation of Himself to Israel was Scripture, then how much more the inspired record of his Son whom the Old Testament had anticipated, and in whom God's revelation had reached its consummation? The New Testament Canon was not fixed by formal decisions of Bishops or Synods, but gradually by the consensus of the whole Church. The story of this process is exceedingly interesting to every Bible student, and convinces one that the same Spirit who led the Apostles to write the word of truth leads the Church in the recognition and interpretation of it.

The Immediate Successors of the Apostles (95-120 A.D.)

Following immediately after the Apostles there were at the close of the First Century and the beginning of the Second three conspicuous leaders in the Church: Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Ignatius. Each of them has been

mentioned previously in our studies. A very interesting fact about them is that each of them was, according to our best information, a disciple of one of the Apostles.[1] They were the connecting link between the Church of the Apostles and the Church of later centuries. How did they regard the books that were later received into the New Testament Canon?

Unhappily very few of the letters of Clement, Polycarp, or Ignatius have been preserved to us. Yet it is a remarkable fact that in these few letters clear references are made to all the books in the New Testament save eight, though with one or two exceptions neither the writer nor the book is mentioned by name.[2] All of these eight are of the shorter Epistles. This fact illustrates very forcibly the large place which the writings of the Apostles occupied in the minds of their immediate successors. A further fact is worthy of our notice in this connection; though these men were successors of the Apostles in the ministry of the Church, each of them recognizes in plainest language a difference between his writings and the writings of the Apostles. Clement is careful not to claim for himself Apostolic authority. "I cannot write with authority like the blessed Paul," he says in his letter to the Corinthians. Polycarp speaks in like

[1] Clement was possibly a disciple of both Paul and Peter. Polycarp and Ignatius were disciples of John.

[2] There are possible references to five others, though the references are of such an indefinite nature that one cannot speak with confidence. The only books to which no possible reference is made are Jude and 2 and 3 John. (See *Canon of the New Testament*, Westcott, pp. 48 and 54.)

vein: "For neither can I, nor any other such as I am, come up to the wisdom of the blessed and renowned Paul: who . . . did with all exactness and soundness teach the word of truth." "I do not as Peter and Paul command you," wrote Ignatius on his way to Rome to suffer martyrdom. "They were apostles; I am a condemned man."

Clement was bishop of Rome, Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, and Ignatius was bishop of Antioch. Hailing from these widely separated centers, we assume that they accurately represent the attitude of the whole Church at the end of the First Century and beginning of the Second toward the writings of the Apostles. From them we learn three things concerning the status of our New Testament books in their day: *First,* the writings of the Apostles had been widely distributed over the Church, and collections of them had already been made in such important centers as Rome and Smyrna and Antioch. *Second,* these books were regarded as authority in a sense not applicable to other religious literature of that period. Already our second line of inquiry concerning the New Testament Canon, referred to at the beginning of this chapter, is answered: at the beginning of the Second Century and possibly earlier, the writings of the Apostles were in the mind of the Church separated from contemporary literature and held in an esteem accorded no other writings outside the Old Testament Canon. *Third,* the books of the New Testament were not recognized as Scripture. The Church as yet had not felt the necessity for a Canon of Apostolic writings. She was but one generation removed from the Apostles, and men were still

living who had heard directly from them the story of Jesus and their interpretation of him. Faith still rested very largely on the testimony of living witnesses, and the need of the written word was not so imperative as with us. A passage from one of the epistles of Ignatius reflects this state of affairs: "I have heard some say they would not believe in the Gospel only as they found it in the record. To people of that kind I say, 'My authentic records are Jesus Christ, his Cross, and Resurrection.'" Papias, who lived in this period, speaks even more to the point: "For I did not account it that the things from the books were to me of so much profit as the things from a *living and remaining voice.*" Nevertheless, though there was no New Testament Canon, the books of the New Testament were regarded as an authoritative "rule of Christian faith and life." It was nearly three centuries before the limits of the Canon of the New Testament were finally fixed and formally ratified by the Church. We must therefore proceed with our story.

An Increasing Recognition of the Written Word (120-145 A.D.)

Clement wrote his epistles about 95 A.D. From then to 120 A.D., the period covered in the preceding heading, is exactly twenty-five years. Push forward the story another twenty-five years, as far as 145 A.D., and we will discover that a marked change has come over the mind of the Church with reference to the importance of the records of the Apostles. It had been more than a hundred years since Jesus had lived on the earth and nearly half a

century since John had died at Ephesus. Few men remained on the earth who had had intimate intercourse with the Apostles. They could no longer, as Papias, look to the "living and remaining voice" to tell them first hand what the disciples had said. The period of transition from the oral to the written Gospel was at hand. The Church was launching into a new era, and she needed a trustworthy record of the Incarnation to guide her through all the years that lay ahead. In this new era the facts of the Christian faith must be established by the written word. This necessity was met in the writings of the Apostles, in which were preserved both the facts and the spirit of the Gospel. To them the Church turned with an increasing recognition of their indispensableness to the propagation of the Christian faith. How wonderful is that Providence which foresees our necessities and provides for them before they have fallen upon us!

The principal witness of this period is Justin Martyr. "He was born probably about the year 100 A.D., near Jacob's well," and died a martyr about 165 A.D. His writings which have been preserved appear to have been written somewhere about 145 A.D., or at any rate they reflect the state of the Church at that time. One of his books is in the form of dialogue with a Jew, Trypho by name. He is telling him of Jesus in order to win him to the Christian's faith. Where does he turn for the facts of our Lord's life? To the oral traditions and recollections of the elders, as Papias had done? He turns rather to certain books which he calls "The Memoirs of the Apostles." In another place he calls them "the Gospels," and they are none other than the four Gospels of our New Testament.

He quotes them at length and in detail. "The written records were now regarded as the sufficient and complete source of knowledge with regard to the facts of the Gospel." (Westcott.) The Church was rapidly coming to the position she has maintained to this day, that her message concerning the Saviour of the world is established by the written testimony of the men whom Jesus appointed to be his witnesses and first interpreters.

Justin Martyr bears witness to a second significant fact concerning the books of the New Testament. In describing the weekly worship of Christians he says: "On the day called the day of the Sun [Sunday] a gathering takes place of all who live in the towns or in the country in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, so long as the time permits. Then the reader stops and the leader impresses by word of mouth, and urges the imitation of these good things." By "Memoirs of the Apostles" he certainly means the Gospels, as above noted, and in the opinion of the writer he includes other writings of the Apostles as well. It is plain that in the time of Justin, in less than half a century after the death of John, these "Memoirs" were placed on a level with the Old Testament Scriptures and read with them in the services of the Church.[3] He speaks of this practice as being no innovation, but an established custom. How long before this the writings of the Apostles were read with the Old Testament we can-

[3] "When he names the Memoirs before the Old Testament Scriptures, he really places them not merely on a level with them, but above them." (Gregory, *The Canon and Text of the New Testament*, p. 91.)

not say. Nearly a hundred years before Paul had given directions that his letters be read in the Churches, though in that instance not as Scripture. We may safely say, however, that before the middle of the Second Century the writings of the Apostles were being recognized as having the authority of Scripture, and that a well-defined New Testament Canon was in the process of formation.

The statement of Justin Martyr that certain Memoirs of the Apostles were in his day read in the services of the Church indicates the process by which the New Testament Canon was determined. The question of that day was not what books should be admitted into the Bible and what books should not be admitted. The question was rather what books were worthy to be read in the worship of the Church. *The writings of the Apostles which were customarily read in the services of the Church gradually, almost unconsciously, grew into a universally recognized Canon of Scripture.* The New Testament Canon was not wrought amid the controversy of councils, but it grew in the atmosphere of worship. It grew under the guiding influence of the Spirit, quietly as the lily grows, and the Church did not fully realize what was coming to pass until the perfected flower bloomed in all its loveliness.

The Oldest List of New Testament Books (170 A.D.)

Let us advance in our story another twenty-five years, to 170 A.D., at which time was written, according to the opinion of the best scholars, the oldest extant list of the New Testament books. It is called the Muratorian Frag-

ment, after Muratori, an Italian priest and historian, who in 1740 discovered the document in the library at Milan. Its author is unknown, but it is undoubtedly a list of New Testament books commonly received in the Church and read in her services, about 170 A.D. The first lines of the list are lost, but the writer no doubt begins with Matthew and Mark, for the legible portion of the fragment begins by saying that "the Gospel of Luke, the physician, companion of Paul, stands third." The fourth Gospel, he says, was written by John, "a disciple of the Lord . . . for he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but also a hearer, and moreover a historian of all the wonderful works of the Lord in order." He names the thirteen epistles of Paul and the three epistles of John. The only books in our New Testament which do not appear in the list are Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, and James. There is a strong possibility that these were later omitted from the list through the error of a copyist, since we know that Hebrews, 1 Peter, and James were known in the Church before this time. One book is added which does not appear in our New Testament. "We receive moreover the Revelation of John and Peter only, which [that is, the Revelation of Peter] some of our body will not have read in the Church." The Revelation of Peter, whatever that might have been, was on the borderland of Scripture, like Ecclesiasticus in the history of the Old Testament Canon, and, like Ecclesiasticus, it was finally rejected.

The testimony of this old fragment is invaluable in a history of the Canon. By 170 A.D., and how much earlier we cannot say, most of the books of the New Testament

were generally received throughout the Church as Scripture. Only four are omitted, and these possibly through the error of some copyist. Only one is added and that with an expression of doubt as to its genuineness.

The Writings of the Apostles Recognized as Scripture

Let us advance our story another twenty-five years to 195 A.D., and we find ourselves amid the closing years of the Second Century. This period witnesses a very important development in the history of the New Testament Canon. "It is an established fact that the Scriptures of the New Testament are placed by the end of the Second Century entirely on the same footing with those of the Old." It was an age of controversy. Christianity had spread into all parts of the Roman Empire and beyond, and brought thus into intimate contact with Greek philosophy and Roman legalism it was but natural that all manner of controversies should have arisen concerning the new faith. Violent opponents, such as Celsus, attacked it with consummate skill and daring. Heretics, with all kinds of novel notions, threatened to rob it of its original simplicity and power. During the latter years of the Second Century and the first half of the Third (say from 180-253 A.D.), there arose four great churchmen to define and defend the Christian Faith: Irenæus of Lyons (France), Tertullian of North Africa, and Clement and Origen of Alexandria. The last of the Apostles had been dead for about one hundred years, and none remained on the earth who had known any of them. What

weapon should the defenders of the faith use? They turned to the writings of the Apostles—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The high value which these men placed on the writings of the New Testament was nothing new. We have observed how Clement of Rome and Justin Martyr appealed to them, and how from the days of the Apostles they were treasured by the Church. The exigencies of heated controversies, however, served to emphasize their authority and bring them permanently to the fore as a recognized Canon of Apostolic Scripture.

We have already in our studies met Irenæus, the friend of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. In his writings he quotes from all our New Testament books save six, and "mostly by name and as Scripture." Clement of Alexandria quotes from all save five, and Tertullian from all save four.[4] Origen, the last of the four and possibly the greatest Biblical scholar in the ancient world, has made a singular contribution to the history of the Canon. He has left us a list of New Testament books in which every book in our New Testament is named. He expresses some doubt as to 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. He is the first of the Church fathers to mention 2 Peter. At last, in the first half of the Third Century, all the writings which are to-day found in the New Testament had been assembled in one list. In another place Origen calls

[4] That they did not quote from all the New Testament books does not necessarily mean that they did not recognize the unquoted books as Scripture. They may have had no occasion to quote the others. Neither of them quotes 2 Peter or 2 or 3 John, but how often are these little Epistles quoted in our day?

these books "The Divine Scriptures of the New Covenant."

It is easy to see how an enumeration of the apostolic books went hand in hand with an appeal to them as Scripture. If the writings of the Apostles were to be the rule of the Church's faith, then the Church must determine what books were written by them. The testimony of Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen to the apostolic authorship of the books of the New Testament is of great value. They were good scholars and had a wide acquaintance with the Church of their day. Through their contacts with the generation that went before, they received in direct line the traditions of the Apostles.[8] Their virtual unanimity on what books are apostolic, and the virtual agreement of the whole Church with them, puts the question fairly beyond dispute. The New Testa-

[8] Irenæus had heard Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, Tertullian was acquainted with Churches founded by the Apostles and appeals to them to establish the apostolic authorship of letters addressed to them. Origen was a pupil of Clement of Alexandria, who was a pupil of Pantænus, who had no doubt known disciples of the Apostles. Facts handed down from teacher to pupil in this way are very trustworthy. While the author was writing this chapter he discovered in his congregation a woman advanced in years whose grandfather was one of John Wesley's class leaders. She distinctly remembers her grandfather, and has heard from him many things concerning the founder of Methodism. Wesley has been dead one hundred and twenty-five years, and yet one living person stands between the writer and an eyewitness of Wesley's ministry. One century after the last of the Apostles had died there no doubt remained many who had known disciples of the Apostles and therefore preserved in unbroken line the apostolic traditions.

ment Canon is rapidly emerging, but its limits have not yet been definitely fixed. A few of the less conspicuous books, notably James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, remain on the borderland of the Canon, accepted by some and questioned by others.

The Limits of the New Testament Finally Determined

We will carry our story forward a little more than half a century to 312 A.D. In that epochal year Constantine, the Roman Emperor, was converted to Christianity. Immediately after his conversion he "devoted himself to the reading of the Divine Scriptures," and encouraged others to follow his example. In 331 he ordered Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea and the possessor of the most celebrated Christian library of antiquity, to prepare for him fifty copies of the Scriptures, "written on prepared skins." It is possible that an old manuscript of the Bible, discovered in the Convent of St. Catherine, in 1844 is one of the copies which Eusebius made for Constantine. It contains all the books of our New Testament, with Barnabas and Hermas added as an appendix, as the Apocrypha was added to the Old Testament. If this is one of Eusebius's copies, then the Canon of the New Testament Scriptures had assumed its present form prior to 331 A.D. Whether or not the old manuscript is Eusebius's we cannot definitely say. The facts point strongly to that conclusion.

On Easter 367 A.D. Athanasius, the great bishop of Alexandria, issued a pastoral letter to the Churches under

his care. The subject of this letter was the Canon of Scripture, and the purpose of it was to distinguish the canonical books from a large number of apocryphal books current at that time. "Since some have turned their hands to draw up for themselves the so-called apocrypha," he says, "and to mingle these with the inspired writings, it seemed good to me, urged by true brethren, and having learned from time gone by, to set forth in order from the first the books that are canonized and handed down, and believed to be divine." Then, after enumerating the books of the Old Testament, he names the books of the New Testament Canon. This later list includes all our New Testament books and none others. He expresses no doubt concerning any of them. Following the enumeration of the Old Testament and New Testament books he adds: "In these alone is the teaching of godliness heralded. Let no one add to these. Let nothing be taken away from these."

Sixteen years later, in 383 A.D., Jerome began his revision of the "Old Latin" New Testament. In his version of the New Testament he follows Athanasius, and includes just those books which are to-day in our New Testament. With the close of the Fourth Century we may say that the question of the New Testament Canon was closed. Certain books that had been questioned are admitted, such as 2 Peter and the little epistles of John; and certain others which had lingered on the borderland of Scripture were rejected, as the Epistle of Clement and Barnabas and the Apocalypse of Peter.

In 382 A.D. the Damascene Council met in Rome. Jerome was a leading spirit, and a list of the New Testa-

ment books was published which corresponds exactly with the books in his version of the New Testament. Fifteen years afterwards, in 397 A.D., the third Council of Carthage assembled. It likewise published the books of the New Testament recognized as canonical, and the last is in exact agreement with Athanasius, Jerome, and the Damascene Council. Other Councils followed with like results. That the Councils did not determine the contents of the New Testament it is plain. They simply registered what the universal Christian mind had determined. Slowly in the light of proven facts and under the discriminating leadership of the Spirit, we verily believe, the Church had come to one mind concerning the New Testament Canon, and the power which the New Testament has wielded over the races of men abundantly proves the rightness of her judgment.

Conclusion

So the Bible grew through the vicissitudes of more than twenty centuries. It was not dropped out of heaven, ready-made, by some mysterious hand. It is the record of God's increasing revelation of himself. Step by step it grew as men were led by the Spirit to understand the heart of the Eternal. It begins with the story of a garden where man sinned, it ends with the description of a city where shineth the glory of God. On the first pages we discover God the Creator, on the last we find the Lamb of God who was for sinners slain. No story is so fascinating or satisfying. This body of writings is inspired in a sense that is not applicable to any other of

the world's literature. At the conclusion of our studies we may say more emphatically than at the beginning: *The Bible is a unique book. There is none other like it. There is none other comparable to it. It is an inspired book. It is, in an especial sense, God's Word to us.*[6]

The books of the Bible were not mechanically selected and joined together by the decrees of Councils, and the *ipse dixit* of Popes. Gradually they grew into a Canon of Scripture as the whole Church, which is the body of Christ, recognized them to be the Word of God. Popes and Councils may err, but when the whole family of God, men of every age and clime who have known him and walked with him, agree with such remarkable unanimity that certain books are inspired Scripture, then indeed they can be nothing else. The sheep know the shepherd's voice. It is the work of the Lord, and marvelous in our eyes.

If one who has followed this story to the end should be disturbed by discovering that the Bible was not made in the way he had thought, let him read again the words of the Apostle whose writings occupy so prominent a place in its pages: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? and who hath been his counsellor? For of him and through him and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STUDENT

1. What three lines of inquiry are involved in a history of the Canon? How far have our studies of the New Testament Canon thus far taken us? What remains yet to be determined?

[6] See pages 11 and 12.

2. Name the three Church leaders conspicuous at the beginning of the Second Century. Tell all you can about each. What use do they make of our New Testament writings? What distinction between their writings and the writings of the apostles? What three things do we learn concerning the status of the New Testament at this time? Why was not the written record so necessary as later?

3. What change had come over the mind of the Church at the end of twenty-five years? Show how Justin Martyr turns to New Testament writings to establish Christian truth. How does he describe Church worship? What were the "Memoirs of the Apostles"? Show how through reading the writings of the apostles in worship they were recognized as Scripture and grew into a Canon.

4. To what date does the next twenty-five years take us? Describe the Muratorian Fragment, and tell what it indicates concerning the formation of the New Testament Canon.

5. What advance is noted in the recognition of the Canon by the end of the Second Century? What conditions threatened to devitalize the Christian faith? Name the four outstanding leaders at the close of the second and beginning of the third centuries, and show how they appealed to Scripture. Who was the first to bring the New Testament books into one list? Concerning what books does he express doubts? Show how an appeal to New Testament books necessitated settling once for all what books belonged in the Canon. Show the things that qualified the men above named to judge in this matter.

6. For what purpose and when did Eusebius make fifty copies of the Bible? What was probably the contents of his New Testament? What testimony do Athanasius and Jerome bear to the fixedness of the Canon. The Damascene Council and Council of Carthage? How was the New Testament Canon formed?

7. Has this story of how the Bible grew vitalized its message for you and increased your faith in it as the Word of God? Justify your answers.

APPENDIX

The following table of dates is prepared in order to aid the student to grasp the continuity of the story told in the foregoing chapters. Dates prior to the sixth century B.C. can for the most part be only approximately determined. A more complete table can be found in Sanday's *Inspiration* (pp. 448-467), from which the following is very largely taken.

2000 (?) B.C.	Age of Abraham
1400 (?) B.C.	Birth of Moses
1000 (?) B.C.	David King of Israel
937 B.C.	Division of the Kingdom
760-700 B.C.	Age of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah
621 B.C.	Discovery of the Book of the Law
586 B.C.	Fall of Jerusalem and Second Deportation of Jews to Babylon.
536 B.C.	First Return of Jews
444 B.C.	The Law (Pentateuch) received as Scriptures
200 (?) B.C.	The Prophets Canonized
100 (?) B.C.	The Writings Canonized
4 B.C.	Birth of Jesus Christ
30 A.D.	Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ
60-80 A.D.	Composition of the Synoptic Gospels
65 A.D.	Death of Paul
70 A.D.	Destruction of Jerusalem by Romans
90 (?) A.D.	Gospel of John
95 A.D.	Clement writes to the Corinthians
100 (?) A.D.	Death of John
100-120 A.D. (?)	Letters of Ignatius and Polycarp
138-165 A.D.	Writings of Justin Martyr

170 (?) A.D.	Muratorian Fragment
180-190 A.D.	Writings of Irenæus
194-221 A.D.	Writings of Tertullian
185-253 AD.	Life of Origen
331 A.D.	Eusebius's Bible
367 A.D.	Athanasius's Complete Canon
382 A.D.	Damascene Council publishes complete Canon
383 A.D.	Jerome begins his version of complete Canon
397 A.D.	Third Council of Carthage
400 A.D.	Canon so fixed through the Church that the question has never been reopened to any appreciable degree

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